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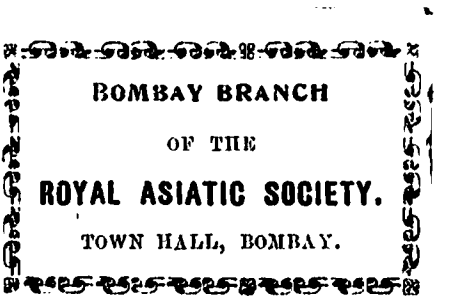


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THE

# ROMANCE OF THE PEERAGE.

THE

# ROMANCE OF THE PEERAGE

OR

## Curiosities of Family History.

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BY

GEORGE LILLIE CRAIK.

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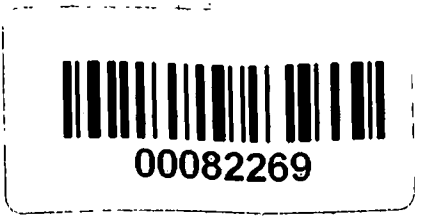

# PREFACE.

THE conception of some such work as the present has probably occurred to many persons. The subject is seen at the first glance to be an abundantly rich one, and it is also nearly unbroken ground. Unbroken, at least, by the plough, or for any productive purpose. It has been subjected, to be sure, to a species of spade husbandry; left exclusively to the genealogists, it has lain like a large and fertile tract of country made over to the grave-diggers. That there are serious difficulties in the way of reclaiming it to the uses of popular literature may, however, be inferred from the attempt never having been made.

In these circumstances the present undertaking claims, as it will need, all the indulgent consideration due to the labours of a first adventurer. The subject is as pathless as the ocean; and, for any such purpose as that in hand, chart or survey of it there is none. The most comprehensive of the common books of reference embrace only the driest and deadest of the facts belonging to it. The really curious and indicative facts, those

in which the life and spirit of the subject reside, must nearly all be sought for elsewhere.

At the same time, it is with facts alone that the present work professes to deal. It aspires in nowise to the airy splendours of fiction. The romance of the peerage which it undertakes to detail is only the romantic portion of the history of the peerage.

It is rather strange that Family History should have been so much neglected as it has been by literature. While it stands between History commonly so called, or national history, and the history of individuals, or Biography, it is as distinct from both as these are from one another; and, with something of the peculiar character of each, it has no want of attractions of its own. It supplies many illustrations both of the political, the biographical, and the literary history of past ages. But, in particular, it would seem to be mostly in Family History that we are to find the History of Society, which indeed means, in the main, the history of domestic life.

This work, therefore, offers itself as, in the first place, a contribution, however slight and imperfect, to the History of Society in England. And, being that, it must be, further, a contribution to the History and Philosophy of Human Nature. The great antithetic poet has pronounced that "the *proper* study of mankind is Man." It is fortunate that it should be so, for this is also, under one form or another, the most popular of all studies. In the present age the favourite medium or vehicle from which its lessons are imbibed is Fiction. What is the modern novel but the Philosophy

of Human Nature and Human Life teaching, more or less wisely, by example? And is not a novel also, usually, a family history? Real history, of whatever kind, with its indispensable alloy of the prosaic, and its incompleteness and comparative shapelessness, will always show to a disadvantage, in many respects, beside its brilliant rival; yet its more unpretending qualities, too, have their value and their claim to attention in relation to this matter. For one thing, the real must ever be, to a certain extent, both the standard and source of the ideal. The more that the former, therefore, is studied and known, the better for the latter. And, after all, with whatever deficiencies it may be chargeable, there is that in the Truth which is never to be found in Fiction. There is something in it which holds even the imagination with a more forceful grasp.

The family history of the Peerage has the recommendation for the present purpose of having been much more largely recorded than any other family history; such a limitation, besides, gives distinctness and manageableness to what would otherwise be a boundless subject. Nor is there any danger that our survey by being thus circumscribed will be confined to a single class of the community, and that the smallest; there is no one of our ennobled families the history of which can be long pursued without conducting us over the whole field of English society. All of them have been mixed up in every possible way with every rank of the people. In some instances, the oldest and highest of them have gradually sunk, or been suddenly thrown down, to the humblest social position;

in other cases, the stream of descent has flowed for ages in the obscurest channel, and the heir to a coronet has been found in the descendant of generations of peasants or mechanics. Every ancient genealogical tree among us has projected itself over the land, by branch or offshoot, in all directions. Thousands of persons now hidden in the common crowd of the population are the not remote connexions of the most distinguished houses, or the remnants of lineages that once were among the most honoured in the realm. The romance of the peerage, in this way, often descends to both the middle and the working classes.

But the social and constitutional position of the peerage would of itself be enough to make the history of the persons and families that have composed it at various periods of general interest and eminently deserving of attention. It is true that the present design is something much less ambitious than a History of the Peerage; it must be considered to be confined chiefly to the lighter and more ornamental parts of that subject. But, although mere genealogical details will necessarily be kept in a subordinate place, the histories of many noble houses will fall to be sketched in the course of the work; and the order of time will also be so far adhered to in the sequence of the several narratives, or they will at least in general so rise one out of another, as to preserve the progressive character of a continuous history. It is hoped that thus, with the assistance of tabular statements and indexes, the work when completed, probably in four or five more volumes, will present a body of information respecting the state

of the peerage in every age sufficiently comprehensive for the general reader.

That the volume now in the hands of the reader has its share of mistakes may be taken for certain. The subject is singularly adapted to exemplify that capacity of erring which may almost be predicated as not merely a property but a definition of humanity. I have not, however, been indifferent to correctness even in the smallest matters.

It will not be expected that every statement in a work of this nature should have received what may be called an original investigation. In general, the writer must be indebted for his materials to researches of a much more laborious and extended kind than he can himself undertake. The several cases cannot be got up as Peerage Cases are got up for the House of Lords by the labours upon each, perhaps for years, of a staff of lawyers and agents. The writer cannot, for example, go hunting out missing dates and other minutiæ among parish registers and tombstones. Neither can he, in most instances, pursue the story very far among unpublished documents of any kind, or even run after all its scattered particulars over the world of miscellaneous literature. In this first volume, although, as will be seen, information has been sought for in a good many quarters, and upon portions of the principal narrative more particulars, perhaps, have been accumulated than some readers will think necessary, much, no doubt, has been overlooked, and plenty of gleaning left for any one who may think it worth his while to follow me over the same field.

The volume, nevertheless, contains rectifications and enlargements of the received accounts of several of the persons of historical celebrity who figure in it, and also a number of things which now appear in print for the first time. As coming under the former head, I may refer to the elucidation of the principal poetical work and the most remarkable passage in the life of Sir Philip Sidney,—to the additional facts collected respecting Charles Blount Lord Montjoy,—and to the hitherto unnoticed traces of Sir Christopher Blount found in the Burghley Papers. The matter wholly new comprises many Letters of the old Countess of Leicester, her daughter the famous Lady Rich, and Lord Rich;—Montjoy's own account of his connexion with Lady Rich;—extracts from unpublished Letters of Chamberlain and other news-writers;—the first correct statement that has been given, as far as I am aware, of the celebrated Foljambe's case, constantly cited, though, as it turns out, without any grounds, as having settled an important point in the English Law of Marriage and Divorce;—and the highly curious Letters relating to the death of Amy Robsart, the heroine of Scott's *Kenilworth*.

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*The following are the Full Titles of the printed Collections of Papers, and other Works, which are cited in the foot Notes by leading words:—*

Letters and Memorials of State, written and collected by Sir Henry Sydney, &c. By Arthur Collins, Esq. 2 vols. fol. Lon. 1746. [*Sidney Papers*, and *Memoirs.*]

A Collection of State Papers—from the year 1542 to 1570—left by Lord Burghley. By Samuel *Haynes*, A.M. Fol. Lon. 1740.

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Illustrations of British History, &c. By Edmund *Lodge*, Esq. 2nd edit. 3 vols. 8vo. Lon. 1838.

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*Historical Collections* of the Noble Families of Cavendish, Holles, Vere, Harley, and Ogle. By Arthur *Collins*, Esq. Fol. Lon. 1752.

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Original Letters illustrative of English History. By Henry *Ellis*. 3 vols. 8vo. Lon. 1824. [*First Series*].

Original Letters illustrative of English History. By Henry *Ellis*. *Second Series*. 4 vols. 8vo. Lon. 1827.

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The Baronage of England. By William *Dugdale*. 3 vols. fol. Lon. 1675-6.

The Court of King James the First; by Dr. Godfrey. *Goodman*, Bishop of Gloucester. To which are added Letters illustrative of the Personal History of the most distinguished characters in the Court of that Monarch and his Predecessors. By John S. *Brewer*, M.A. 2 vols. 8vo. Lon. 1839.

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Desiderata Curiosa. By Francis *Peck*, M.A. New. edit. 2 vols. 4to. Lon. 1779.

The Great Oyer of Poisoning: The Trial of the Earl of Somerset for the Poisoning of Sir Thomas Overbury. By Andrew *Amos*, Esq. 8vo. Lon. 1846.

A Political Index to the Histories of Great Britain and Ireland. By Robert *Beatson*, LL.D. Third Edition. 3 vols. 8vo. Lon. 1806.

A Treatise on the Law of Adulterine Bastardy. By Sir Harris *Nicolas*, K.C. M.G. 8vo. Lon. 1836.

# CORRECTIONS AND ADDITIONS.

Page 9, line 11, *for* "fourteenth," *read* "fifteenth."

Page 25, add to note * :—At the end of a copy of this narrative of Essex's sickness and death in Harl. MS. 293, is a poem entitled *The Song of his Honour's, sung the night before he died.* In Sloane MS. 1896 (not 1898, as stated by Ritson in *Bibliog. Poet.* 188) the same poem is given as *A godly and virtuous Song* made by the Earl in 1567. The verses are printed in the First Edition of the *Paradise of Dainty Devices*, 1576 (the same year in which Essex died), with the title of "The Complaint of a Sinner, [made] and sung by the Earl of Essex upon his deathbed in Ireland," but with the signature of *F. K.* In the Second Edition, 1577, the signature is *F. Kindlemarshe* (the same person mentioned in the *Bibliog. Poet.*, 264, as *Francis Kynwelmersh*, of Gray's Inn, "who united with Gascoigne in translating the *Jocasta* of Euripides, 1566.") In the Third Edition, 1596, there is no signature. Mr. Park has printed the verses, which are 12 quatrains of the common eight and six syllable metre, with the variations of all the copies, in his edition of Walpole's *Royal and Noble Authors*, II. 18.

Page 44, line 1 of *Note*, *for* "Blomfield's," *read* "Blomefield's."

Page 120, line 3 from foot ; *for* "These last words refer, &c.," *substitute* "He loses no opportunity, we see, of expressing or professing his conjugal faith and devotion."

Page 121, line 5 from foot ; *for* "worse acts," *read* "worse arts."

Page 305, *Note* on sentence, "This and other facts, &c.;"—Many years before this we find James Wadsworth, the convert from popery, dedicating the Second Part of his *English Spanish Pilgrim*, 4to, Lon. 1630, in the following terms :—"To the truly Noble and

highly Honourable Henry Earl of Holland, Lord Kensington, &c. . . . . , the Right Honourable Robert Earl of Warwick, the truly Noble the Lord Mountjoy Earl of Newport, three most happy brethren," &c.

Page 331, *Note* to sentence, "Death did not find Lettice Knollys," &c. ;"—The document of latest date proceeding from the Countess of Leicester that I have met with is the following receipt, for a copy of which I am indebted to Lord De Lisle:—"*Primo die Aprilis, anno regni Jacobi 1mo.*—Received by me, Lady Lettice Countess of Leicester, of the Right Honourable the Lord Sidney, by the hands of Arnold Oldesworth, Esq., the sum of a hundred and fifteen pounds of lawful English money; due to me, at the Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Mary the Virgin, for my last year's rent issuing out of the manors of Wooton and Edge, in the County of Chester. Witness hereunto my hand and seal, the day and year above written. L. LEICESTER." The date of this would be the 1st of April, 1603.

Page 363, *Note* to sentence "The notion of any sitting in that assembly," &c.:—What Sir Harris Nicolas has written on another occasion may be quoted here:—"A single writ, even if to a regular parliament, would not, it is believed, constitute a Barony in fee descendible to the heirs of the person so summoned."—*Synopsis of Peerage*, 391, (*Barony of Lovaine.*)

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I have to regret having overlooked two valuable articles in the *Gentleman's Magazine;* the one on *Lady Robert Dudley* in the number for *December* 1845, the other on *Lettice Countess of Leicester* in that for *March* 1846. Both articles contain some facts not mentioned in the present volume, but none, I think, which affect the story as I have related it.—G. L. C.

# ROMANCE OF THE PEERAGE.

## LETTICE KNOLLYS; HER MARRIAGES AND HER DESCENDANTS.

In such an undertaking as this it is not possible to follow altogether the usually reasonable and convenient rule of beginning at the beginning; whether it is to be taken as resting on the authority of the Giant Moulineau,—*commencer par le commencement*, or on that of Aristotle, in the *De Poetica*,—ἀρξάμενοι κατὰ φύσιν, πρῶτον ἀπὸ τῶν πρώτων. The subject has no proper beginning. Our narratives will run as often parallel to one another as in succession. Yet the one to which the reader's attention is now to be solicited takes so wide a sweep, that it will serve better than almost any other would do to open the subject, and to lay a general foundation for the work.

Under the present title it is proposed to trace a chain of family history extending, from first to last, over not much short of a century, that most picturesque of our English centuries which lies between the Reformation

and the Great Rebellion. The story has many curious links, and involves some of the most noted figures of the age of Elizabeth and James, as well as many others that are now generally forgotten, but whose memory has perished rather for want of an historian than of a history. With some shorter sketches which will naturally grow out of and follow it, it will carry us a long way through so much of our subject as lies in the sixteenth century, beyond which it is matter of curious antiquarianism rather than of what has any living interest for the general reader. But that century, or at least the latter half of it, was the morning of the day in which we still live. No night divides that time from our own. Our present more advanced civilization is the same that then existed. There has been a progress, but no interruption of the continuity. The sun has mounted higher in the heavens, that is all. Nearly all the more conspicuous not only of the things but of the persons of the present day are derivations in a direct and unbroken line from those of that age. It was the birth period of our actual social condition; if not that in which its seeds were sown, or in which they took root, yet that in which their growth first showed itself above the ground. We feel our predecessors of the Elizabethan age to have been our progenitors. We hardly look upon our earlier progenitors as more than our predecessors.

Whatever enables us better to understand public men must set public events too in a clearer light. At any rate the memorabilia of our infinitely diversified humanity, that are about to be gleaned from the neglected

records of private life, may do something to animate the spacious solitudes in the delineations of History, distinctively so called; delineations, which for the most part give us much such a vision or impression of the past as we might get from sauntering through the crowd of tombs in Westminster Abbey, and which, with their light all broken up into points, often more resemble sketches of the heavens in a starry night than representations of anything that can readily be believed to have ever gone on upon the earth. It may be, perhaps, the proper function or prerogative of History so to elevate, and as it were stellify, those upon whom it bestows its illustration. All due honour to that high ideal style of art! Far be it from any of us to quarrel with such a consecration of the memorable dead. But yet the celebrities, male and female, of other days were in reality something more than either so many statues or so many stars And one naturally longs, after having had enough of the distant and more scenic exhibition, to get a little more insight into the actual truth of the matter. We would re-convert the stars and statues into men and women. We would have that radiant population, which History keeps confined, upon the separate and silent system, so far away overhead, brought down and allowed to mingle again for awhile with one another, and with the rest of the world, upon the level ground. Contemplated as they move apart in that concave firmament, shining and wheeling away in everlasting loneliness, it is difficult to have perfect faith in them as having ever been brothers or sisters of the species. We would know if in very truth they were once flesh

and blood like ourselves, those visionary-looking shapes, so bright yet so cold. We would see the luminary in déshabille. We would have the statue to unbend itself. We feel inclined to address the too dazzling transformation with a request that he would lay aside his historic rays for a little—

> Pignora da, genitor, per quæ tua vera propago
> Credar, et hunc animis errorem detrahe nostris.

The long succession of strange occurrences now to be detailed is here presented in a complete and connected form for the first time; many of the facts are to be found in print only in a native state, imbedded in certain masses of old papers; some have never appeared in print before. From so much of the ground to be gone over being hitherto unbroken, a more copious introduction of documentary matter will be necessary than where the general course of the narrative proceeds along a comparatively beaten road; the story, too, abounds in dark and mysterious passages, which can only be elucidated, or fairly propounded, by a careful arrangement of the evidence and the comparison of one portion of it with another. But it is a story that will be found to conduct us as far into the most secret recesses of the social system of the time as perhaps any other that has ever been told.

§ 1.

To the generality of my readers the very name of Lettice Knollys will probably be new. Yet she was one of Queen Elizabeth's nearest relations,—as near as Mary Stuart, one degree nearer than Mary's son, who inherited Elizabeth's crown. She was the eldest daughter of Sir Francis Knollys, by his wife, originally Catharine Carey, whose mother was the elder sister of Anne Boleyn. Lettice was therefore first cousin once removed to her Majesty. Elizabeth, when she ascended the throne, at the age of five-and-twenty, in 1558, had neither father nor mother, brother nor sister, uncle nor aunt, alive; more than one of these nearest branches the axe had lopt off; the only individuals in existence more nearly related to her than Lettice Knollys, were Lettice's mother and that lady's brother, Henry Carey, soon after created Lord Hunsdon, who were her full cousins by the mother's side; and the Countess of Lennox and Duchess of Suffolk, the daughters of her father's sisters, Margaret and Mary. But these two latter ladies both speedily fell into disgrace, or under suspicion; their blood was too royal, or too red, as the phrase ran; so that her cousins of the Boleyn stock, the Careys and the Knollyses, had all the sunshine of the royal relationship to themselves.

Sir Francis Knollys, besides being married to her first-cousin, had another claim upon her Majesty's consideration. He was one of the staunchest Protestants she had about her. Not that Protestantism

was by any means one of Elizabeth's strongest passions. But in the circumstances it was necessary that she should be as much a Protestant as she could, and also that she should seek or accept the service and support of better Protestants than herself. She had, as it were, married Protestantism, and taken its name. Most of the Court Protestantism of that day, however, was of a somewhat damaged character. Even Cecil had conformed in the preceding reign; and most of the other courtiers and ministers of the new Queen, however zealous professors they had become since her accession, or had previously been in the days of her brother, had, in like manner, deemed it better in those of her sister to go to mass than either to the stake or into exile. But Knollys, who had been in office under Edward, had resigned everything, and, shaking the dust of his native land from off his shoes, had betaken him to where the gospel light shone full and free in its native land of Germany, whence he had returned, when the darkness passed away at home, a fiercer Protestant than ever. Indeed, like most of the refugees whom this change brought back to England, he was now probably ready for a second Reformation, if such a thing should come in his way. Elizabeth held what had been already done to be quite enough; but there was no danger in the more extreme principles of her cousin Knollys, who was very well contented to accommodate himself to the established order of things for the present. She never employed him in any high capacity; but he was much in her confidence so long as he lived; and, besides giving him the Household appointment, first of Vice-

Chamberlain, afterwards of Treasurer, she gratified the vanity, or rewarded the fidelity, of the worthy Puritan by making him a Knight of the Garter.

No account of her that has fallen in my way has mentioned when his eldest daughter was born; but a notice of her age in a letter written in her lifetime, to be afterwards cited, shows it to have been in 1539 or 1540. Questionless the little Lettice would be duly nurtured upon the sour milk of the paternal faith; and, notwithstanding sundry startling or puzzling indications, a soul of Puritanism may have lived in her to the end of her days. The light is not always gone out when it is not to be seen. But, whatever may have been her condition as to one kind of grace, we cannot reasonably doubt that she was amply endowed with another kind,—that she was "in outward show elaborate," even if she might be "of inward less exact." Her history would seem sufficiently to prove that "the fatal gift of beauty" had not been withheld from her.

Her father lived through the greater part of her adventures; his death did not take place till the year 1596. Nor did she lose her mother till after she had fairly entered upon her career. "The Right Honourable Lady Catherine Knollys, Chief Lady of the Queen's Majesty's Bedchamber, and Wife to Sir Francis Knollys, Knight, Treasurer of Her Highness' Household," lies buried under the floor of St. Edmund's Chapel in Westminster Abbey, where an inscription on her monument, partly in English prose, partly in quaint Latin verse, informs us that she died at Hampton Court

on the 15th of January 1568 (that is, 1569 according to our present reckoning), after having borne her husband eight sons and eight daughters:—

> Illa tibi liberos sex et bis quinque marito
> Protulit; æqualis femina masque fuit.

By this time her daughter Lettice must have been for some years the wife of Walter Devereux, Viscount Hereford, afterwards the first Earl of Essex of that name.

This first Earl of Essex is outshone in history, and in the popular imagination, by his flashy son the royal favourite; but the father, although he did not play so conspicuous a part in public affairs, nor die a public death, was the higher and more perfect character of the two, and had also the harder fate, and altogether the sadder story.

The progenitor of the English branch of the house of Devereux, which, taking its name from the town of Evreux, was of note, we are told, in Normandy before the Conquest, is said to have been one of William's captains at the battle of Hastings; but the Earl's direct ancestors remained commoners down to his great-great-grandfather, who married the daughter of the sixth Lord Ferrers of Chartley, and was summoned to parliament as possessor, in right of his wife, of that ancient barony in 1461. He was slain, fighting on the wrong side, at Bosworth. His eldest son, however, having made his peace with the new king, succeeded as eighth Baron Ferrers. He, by his marriage with the sister and heir of the last Bourchier, Earl of

Essex, acquired for his descendants the lands and lineal representation of that illustrious house, which had inherited the blood and honours of the old Bohuns, Fitzpierces, and Mandevilles, and had four times matched with the royal Plantagenets within the two preceding centuries. Their son, Walter Devereux, previously styled Baron Ferrers of Chartley, Bourchier, and Louvaine, was in 1550 created Viscount of the county of Hereford by Henry the Eighth; this dignity, still remaining in his descendant the present Lord Hereford, who is the fourteenth Viscount, is now the oldest viscountcy in England. The first Viscount Hereford's eldest son, Sir Richard Devereux, died, in the lifetime of his father, in 1547; he had married a daughter of the first Earl of Huntingdon, and had by that alliance connected himself not only with the new nobility of the Hastingses, but also with the far descended Staffords, Barons of Stafford from the Conquest, and latterly Dukes of Buckingham, the lady's mother having been a daughter of the second Duke, Richard of Gloucester's confederate and victim. Lord Essex was the elder of the two sons of this Sir Richard and the Lady Dorothy Hastings; and had succeeded his grandfather as second Viscount Hereford in September 1558, a few weeks before Elizabeth came to the crown. At this date he was a youth just entering his eighteenth year.

For the next ten years he seems to have led mostly a country life, and a somewhat studious one. We may suppose, however, that a young nobleman, so widely and splendidly allied as the Viscount Hereford, would sometimes be drawn away, both from "the running brooks,"

and from his books of every other kind, to show himself in the glittering circle that surrounded Elizabeth at Whitehall or Windsor. It was at court probably that he first beheld Lettice Knollys, moving doubtless a foremost figure among the younger divinities of that heaven, and as yet at least surely, with whatever inflammability of blood, as innocent as she was young and beautiful.

From all we know of the noble Hereford, and also indeed from all we can gather of the lady, we should seem to be entitled to conclude that their marriage was one of affection, that love had made their two hearts one before the priest joined their hands. Alas that the heavenly power should sometimes make so much less substantial work of it than the human operator, that the hands should continue joined and the hearts fall asunder! And woe of woes that ever a few years, or any number of years, should turn passionate love into cold or bitter hate!

They were probably married some time between 1560 and 1565. But the earliest mention I have found of Hereford is in a letter to Cecil from Sir Henry Sidney, Lord President of Wales, dated at Shrewsbury the 8th of August, 1568: "I beseech you, Sir," he says, "remember the Viscount Hereford; you wot what I mean."* Here we seem to have the young nobleman earnestly recommended to the minister by Sidney; and this may have been his first effective introduction to Cecil, with whom he ultimately formed a fast friendship. Immediately after this we find his services called for by

* *Sidney Papers*, I. 36.

the crown, as far as appears for the first time. In September, 1568, the Earl of Shrewsbury, who had now charge of the captive Queen of Scots, is directed, in case of any attempt being made to effect a forcible rescue of his prisoner, to give instant notice to the Earl of Huntingdon and the Viscount Hereford; and they are commanded to be in readiness with such company, especially of horsemen, as they should think themselves to be well assured of, and in their own persons to render the necessary assistance.* When presently after this Huntingdon was ordered to proceed to Tutbury, there to do duty as joint-jailor of the Scottish Queen, or rather to act the spy upon Shrewsbury in his own house, he took his kinsman, the Viscount, with him; and on the 27th of September, they write to Cecil from Tutbury on the same sheet, in reply to some imputations which the secretary had intimated had been made against them by Mary's agent, Lesley, Bishop of Ross, tending apparently to mix them up with the project for bringing about a marriage between the Scottish Queen and the Duke of Norfolk, which had just come to Elizabeth's knowledge, and thrown court and cabinet into consternation. Hereford's few words are probably the first utterance of his on record, and are blunt enough: "That which the Bishop of Ross hath reported of me is most untrue. For any unfit speech which hath passed from me, either of the Duke of Norfolk, or of the Earl of Leicester, I desire but to have it justified to my face, when time shall serve. I have spoken nothing

* *Haynes*, 522.

which I will not say again; and yet that have I not said which might give either of them cause of offence."* This sounds as if already feelings of no very kindly nature had sprung up between the young Viscount and the potent favourite. Elizabeth, meanwhile, did not approve of the Viscount's coming to Tutbury. "We see no cause," she writes on the 1st of October to Shrewsbury and Huntingdon, "that our cousin of Hereford should remain there at Tutbury, but to be in readiness at his own house for our service, if any of you should have need thereof."†

So he returned, it may be inferred, to his house in Caermarthenshire, and to his wife and family. We hear no more of him till the end of the following year, when he put himself at the head of a force of his own raising and lent his aid in crushing the outbreak of the Earls of Northumberland and Westmoreland, known by the name of the Northern Rebellion. Perhaps he may have made friends with Leicester, or his friend Cecil may have for the moment got into the ascendant; it is clear, at any rate, that he now stood high in the royal favour. The Earldom of Essex, since it passed from the Bourchiers, had been held first by Thomas Cromwell, Henry the Eighth's Vicar-General, and then by William Lord Parr of Kendal, the brother of that King's last Queen, Katherine Parr, who was ultimately, in 1559, created Marquis of Northampton. Upon the decease of the Marquis without issue in 1571, the manor of Mark's Hall, near Braintree, in Essex, which had

* *Haynes*, 532. † *Haynes*, 539.

belonged to him, and had fallen to the crown, was bestowed by Elizabeth upon the Viscount Hereford,*— by way of preliminary, as it soon appeared, to the restoration of the title which had been borne by his ancestors. He was created Earl of Essex, with circumstances of great pomp and ceremony, on the 4th of May, 1572. Leaning over him as he bent before her, her Majesty placed the sword-belt across his shoulder, and the cap and coronet upon his head, with her own royal hands. And about the same time, or not long after, he received the Garter.

But he had now touched his culminating point. Whether it was that some secret worm had already begun to gnaw at his domestic peace, or whatever it was that made him weary of home, very soon after this he embarked in a project which was to transfer him to altogether a new scene. He proposed to the Queen to undertake at his own charge the pacification and reduction of a certain disturbed district in the North of Ireland, on condition of being put in possession of half the lands he should recover from the rebels. Fuller affirms that he was put upon this adventure by Leicester, who, he says, "loved the Earl's nearest relation [meaning his wife] better than he loved the Earl himself;" and that he embraced it as being "sensible that his room was more welcome to some than his company at court."† Camden too tells us that he followed "therein the counsel of those who desired above all things to have him farther off, and to plunge him into dangers

* *Lodge*, I. 527. † *Worthies, Caermarthenshire.*

under pretence of procuring him honour." "Which," adds the historian, "he knew well enough; but, being a stirring man, and one not unacquainted with warlike discipline from his very youth, he held on his resolution." *

Having obtained an advance of ten thousand pounds from the Queen on the mortgage of his lately acquired lands in Essex, he set sail from Liverpool on the 16th of August, 1573. His friends the Lords Darcy and Rich, four of his wife's brothers, and other persons of distinction whom he had persuaded to share his fortunes, accompanied him, as well as a multitude of volunteers of a humbler class, all at that bright hour of promise buoyant enough, probably, with hope and good spirits. Tempestuous weather kept them at sea till nearly the end of the month; but this was only the foretaste of worse discouragements and difficulties which they had to battle with after they got to land. Essex was ultimately appointed Governor of Ulster under the Lord Deputy: and he succeeded in putting down the rebellion throughout the greater part of that province. But meanwhile, hampered and thwarted on all hands, he had reaped nothing for himself but losses and crosses of all kinds. He had plunged hastily into an undertaking far too large for the resources at his command. The money that he had brought over with him was soon spent, and the sale or mortgage of more lands did little to relieve him from his embarrassments. Most of the principal persons who had joined him in the adven-

* *Elizabeth*, 1573.

ture in a very short time saw good to return home upon one pretence or another. Covert opposition from the authorities at Dublin was aided by the lukewarmness or worse of the government in England, and by the jealousies and caprices of Elizabeth herself. At last, in the end of March, 1575, came a long dispatch from her Majesty addressed to the Lord Deputy and the Earl conjointly, which drew from the latter two replies that set the man before us far more clearly and completely than all that is recorded of him by other pens.

In the first, addressed to the Lords of the Council, he begins:—"My good Lords, I have of late seen a letter signed by the Queen's Majesty, and jointly endorsed to my Lord Deputy and me, concerning mine enterprize in the province of Ulster; which, although it carry a show of a present proceeding therein, and a consent to all my petitions, yet hath it brought forth none other effects but the present discharge of all that serve under me, and a final dissolving of my enterprise." "Although," he proceeds, "it become me to stand contented with anything that her Majesty shall signify to be her will, yet, when I compare this conclusion to the course that hath been taken with me since my coming hither, I cannot but think the dealing very strange." He reminds them that he had come over with the good liking of all their lordships, and also with the allowance of the Irish Council, the matter having been first thoroughly debated. Yet he had not been in Ireland three months before it was given out that the continuance of the enterprise was in question; in that state it had remained ever since: and now her Majesty's

letter, even while in appearance granting him everything he had asked to enable him to finish his work, was taken by the Lord Deputy as a warrant to overthrow the whole. "My Lords," Essex continues, "I humbly desire you to consider well of this matter. It is somewhat to me (though little to others) that my house should be overthrown, with suffering me to run myself out of breath with expenses. It is more, that, in the word of the Queen, I have, as it were, undone, abused, and bewitched with fair promises O'Donnel, MacMahon, and all others that pretend to be good subjects in Ulster. It is most, that the Queen's Majesty shall adventure this estate [run the risk of losing this kingdom of Ireland], or else subdue rebellion with intolerable charge. . . . . Let my life here, my good Lords, be examined by the straitest commissioners that may be sent; I trust, in examining my faults, they will alledge this for the chief, that I have unseasonably told a plain, probable, honourable, and effectual way how to do the country good. For, of the rest, they can say nothing of me but witness my misery by plague, famine, sickness, continual toil, and continual wants of men, money, carriages, victuals, and all things meet for great attempts. And, if any of these have grown by my default, then condemn me in the whole. I pray you, my Lords, pardon my earnestness; I think I have reason, that am thus amazed with an over sudden warning, that must take a discharge before I am made acquainted with the matter. . . I trust, my Lords, my plain dealing shall not do me hurt with you; for my own part, a solitary life is best for a disgraced person; but, because

there is none of you but hath professed favour towards me, and some of your lordships are mixed with me in blood and alliance, I crave of you all, that, as I have entered into this action with your good likings and advices, so now, the failing being no way to be laid upon me, you will all be means for me to her Majesty to deal well with me for my charge, as in honour, conscience, and justice you shall think good. And so, committing myself, and my posterity, to her Majesty's favour and your persuasion in this point, I commit your lordships to God, and humbly take my leave." *

The other letter is to the Queen, and enters more into the details and circumstances of the case. Nothing was ever more perfectly courteous and respectful than it is, yet without a touch of servility or affected self-depreciation. Throughout, while conveying a deep feeling of disappointment and of unjust requital for important services, it is free from a syllable of asperity to any one. Upon being informed of the Lord Deputy's decision that the enterprise should cease, grieved as he was, after the assurances he had had that his plans should be in all points carried into effect, he had, as was reasonable, delivered over to his lordship all the soldiers that he had under his command in Ulster; "but not," he adds, "before I had used some persuasion to him to make some of the Councillors here privy in so weighty a case; or that I might proceed with some hosting [military force] to establish the country and

* *Sidney Papers*, I. 70.

bring Tirlough [the rebel chief] to order; or that it would please him to take the execution of the plot [plan] upon him, and I to serve privately under him; or as he would himself." "And, having now," he goes on, "no longer soldiers over whom to govern, I have also resigned the government of Ulster, having, I trust, the testimony of his lordship, and all your good subjects here, that during my remaining in that office I have, with your force and my own industry, kept your Pale northward from invasion, your English subjects from slaughter or loss, and the Irish, such as were well inclined, from tyranny of the rebel; yea, and even the rebel himself in fear of his utter overthrow, as might appear by his continual suit for peace. These things in so dangerous a time, as when arms were in manner universally taken in Munster and Connaught, and some parts of Leinster, was thought here to be good service; and so, I do assure myself, your Majesty doth accept it." Then, after vindicating what he had formerly written from an interpretation attempted or affected to be fixed upon his words which would make him to have himself suggested or to be responsible for the course now taken, he declares that now he must confess, though never before, that the charge her Majesty had already been at was utterly lost, since the enterprise was dissolved; while he dared to avow that, if it had gone forward, the money which she had spent had been the best employed that ever she had spent in Ireland, and now it was the worst. He concludes: "There resteth now that I make my protestation, that I am in no way consenting or do allow of this going back of

your northern service. And sure, since there hath not been at any time any default in me, but have been called from the enterprise of Glandeboy [his original speculation] to the defence of the whole province of Ulster, wherein I have served your Majesty, without entertainment [pay], painfully and truly, to your honour, safety of this state, and defence of your subjects, I mistrust not but your Majesty will, both of your justice and bounty, graciously consider of my intolerable charges past; and, above all things, retain me in your Majesty's good opinion, as your humble servant, devoted and most affectionate to serve your Majesty. And, being now altogether private, I do desire your Majesty's good license so to live in a corner of Ulster which I hire for my money; where though I pass my time somewhat obscurely (a life, my case considered, fittest for me), yet shall it not be without some stay in these parts and comfort to such as hoped to be rid from the tyranny of rebels. And so, praying for your Majesty's happy reign, with a long healthful life, I humbly end, at Dublin, this last of March, 1575."*

Noble Essex! gentle as brave, and wise as eloquent, one might almost believe that, if thou hadst lived and been allowed to work out thy own will in thy own way, thou mightest have made something even of Ireland and the Irish, and the half-dozen re-conquests of the country, or thereby, that have had to be effected since thy time, with little satisfactory result after all, might have been rendered unnecessary.

* *Sidney Papers*, I. 69.

But it was not so to be. Essex, after resigning his government and his military command, remained in Ireland all the following summer and autumn; whether secluding himself in his hired house in Ulster, and living in the obscurity which he held to be fittest for him, *his case considered,* whatever that expression may mean, or taking up his residence in Dublin, does not appear. What is certain is, that, released as he now was from his public duties, he made no movement to rejoin his wife and family after his eighteen or twenty months' absence. At last, he re-appeared in England towards the middle of November. Walsingham, writing to Burghley from Windsor on the 18th of that month, states that a messenger from the Earl had just arrived at court with letters to her Majesty, announcing that he was arrived within this realm, and that he greatly desired that he might have leave to come to see her Majesty. "Whereupon," continues Walsingham, "her Majesty wished me to signify unto him that she was glad of his arrival, and was well pleased that he should repair to the court, with condition that with overmuch haste he did not distemper his body. By his servant I learn that on Monday last he did mean to set forward from a house he hath in South Wales, not far from the place where he landed; so that I judge that he will be here within five or six days."*

About two months before this Sir William Fitzwilliam, with or under whom Essex had acted in his late enterprise, had been succeeded as Lord Deputy by Sir Henry

* *Wright*, II. 23.

Sidney, who had several times before held that office. Sir Henry, the father of the famous Sir Philip Sidney, had married the sister of Leicester. Are we to suppose that he had only dissembled with Essex in professing to approve of a new plan for the settlement of Ireland which the Earl had proposed to him, and now came over to lay before her Majesty? On the 25th of October Walsingham had written to Sidney in the following remarkable terms:—"My very good Lord, I was glad to understand, by the Earl of Essex's letters, that your Lordship and he is grown to so good a conclusion touching his demands; whereby his Lordship seemeth to be greatly satisfied with your friendly dealing towards him. Such here as do wish generally well unto that state, and particularly to yourselves, do desire nothing more than the continuance of good liking and sound friendship between you. And therefore, good my Lord, let your ears be closed against tale-bearers, who make their profit of dissension. That nation [the Irish] as I learn, is cunning in that profession; and, therefore, it behoveth your Lordships both to be very circumspect in that behalf. I pray God that pestilent humour receive no nourishment from hence. When I fall into consideration of the soundness of both your judgments, then I shake off all fear; but, when I call to mind the cursed destiny of that island, I cannot put off all dread. I hope your own wisdoms, the calling on any of your friends here, and the good ministers about you there, will prevent the malice of such as shall seek any way to slander you."*

* *Sidney Papers*, I. 74.

Walsingham seems to have in his thoughts some special circumstance which gave ground for apprehending that Sidney and Essex might not long go on harmoniously together. Camden's account is, that when Essex came over to England he openly threatened Leicester, "whom he supposed to have done him injuries." He goes on to say that he was, by Leicester's "cunning court-tricks, who stood in fear of him, and by a peculiar court mystery of wounding and overthrowing men by honours, sent back again into Ireland with the insignificant title of Earl Marshal of Ireland."* He returned to Ireland in the spring of 1576. There he soon found his position worse than ever. He bore up against everything for some months; but at last, having been suddenly taken ill at his own house in Ulster on the night of Thursday, the 30th of August, he rapidly grew worse; and, having two days after come to Dublin Castle, he lay there till he expired, about eleven o'clock on the morning of Saturday the 22nd of September.

The faithful pen of one who was with him to the end —most probably Thomas Knell, one of his two chaplains—has preserved an interesting record of those last three weeks of the Earl's life. Whether his sickness was natural, "through adustion of choler," says this account, "or whether it were of any other accident, the living God both knoweth, and he will revenge it." He was grievously tormented for the space of twenty-two days; but "so thankful was he to God, so joyful of his

* *Elizabeth*, 1576.

correction, and of so valiant a mind, that, although he felt intolerable pain, yet he had so cheerful and noble a countenance, that he seemed to suffer none at all, or very little. Full often on his knees besought he mercy at the hands of God, and continually yielded most faithful and devout prayers with his own mouth, beside the continual desire of prayers to be said of his chaplain." When, having been eighteen days ill, he could no longer either sleep or take nourishment, "and that now no hope of life rested in him, first he set his worldly affairs at a stay within England and Ireland, and finished his last will and testament, wherein he most nobly remembered both his friends and servants." After he had thus made all preparation for death, he is described as having been "more like a divine preacher and heavenly prophet," than a man decorated only with the titles of earthly nobility. What he spoke "brake our very hearts," continues this affectionate narrator, "and forced out abundant tears, partly for joy of his godly mind, partly for the doctrine, and comfort we had of his words. But chiefly I blurred the paper with tears as I writ." "The only care," it is afterwards related, "that he had of any worldly matter was for his children, to whom often he commended his love and blessing, and yielded many times, even with great sighs, most devout prayers unto God that he would bless them and give them his grace to fear him. For his daughters also he prayed, lamenting the time, which is so vain and ungodly, as he said, considering the frailness of women, lest they should learn of the vile world. . . . . He never seemed to sorrow but for his children. O my

poor children, often would he say, God bless you, and give you his grace." Two days before his death, when many noble and worshipful persons were present, he said; "Within this month I was, as you saw, well and strong, and now am ready to die. . . . . Three years I have lived very negligently, and have not served God, but have lived soldierlike. Although a soldier should fear God and serve him, yet I have not served him, but spent my time vainly. I beseech God forgive me." He then desired to have the sacrament administered to him, remarking that he had not received it for three years, although he had not abstained from it in contempt of the ordinance, "but for worldly causes," meaning, it may be supposed, his occupied life. "Many times begging mercy at the hands of God, and forgiveness of his sins, he cried out unto God, Lord forgive me, and forgive all the world, Lord, from the bottom of my heart, from the bottom of my heart, even all the injuries and wrongs, Lord, that any have done unto me. Lord, forgive them; and I forgive them from the bottom of my heart."

Two nights before his death, talking of many of his friends, he spake of Mr. Philip Sidney. "O that good gentleman! Have me commended unto him, and tell him I send him nothing, but I wish him well, and so well that, if God so move both their hearts, I wish that he might match with my daughter. I call him son. He is wise, virtuous, and godly; and, if he go on in the course he hath begun, he will be as famous and worthy a gentleman as ever England bred." His mother, also, who had been a very pious person, having been

mentioned, he said, "Now, I thank God, I have my mother's blessing light upon me." His last hours on earth were serene, nay, almost joyous, as if already he felt the light of heaven about him. "The night following, the Friday night, which was the night before he died," the narrative goes on, "he called William Hewes, which was his musician, to play upon the virginals and to sing. Play, said he, my song, Will Hewes, and I will sing it myself. So he did it most joyfully, not as the howling swan, which, still looking down, waileth her end, but, as a sweet lark, lifting up his hands, and casting up his eyes to his God, with this mounted the crystal skies, and reached with his unwearied tongue the top of the highest heavens. Who could have heard and seen this violent conflict, having not a stonied heart, without innumerable tears and watery plaints?"* Even thus, perhaps in remembrance of the friend who had gone before him, Sir Philip Sidney, who, so it chanced, received his deathstroke at Zutphen on the very anniversary of the death of Essex, the 22nd of September, 1586, had his song of *La Cuisse Rompue* sung to him shortly before he breathed his last. Sidney had not lived out his thirty-second year; Essex had just entered his thirty-sixth. He was born, as it appears, on the 16th of September, 1541.†

His children were three sons and two daughters;

* Account printed by Hearne in Preface (pp. 89—98) to his *Camdeni Annales*, 3 Vols. 8vo. Oxon. 1717; with the corrections from a better MS. given by him in his *Hemingus*, Oxon. 1723, pp. 707—711.

† The modern biographers say, in or about the year 1540. But the true date is distinctly indicated in one of the Latin Epitaphs or Elegies on

the youngest son, who did not grow up, may have been already dead; the eldest was at this time only in his ninth year. Burghley's Irish correspondent, Sir Nicholas White, writes from Waterford in October 1575; "My very good lord, the Earl of Essex, hath taken my second son to be brought up with the Viscount, his son, chiefly for that his mother was a Devereux."* Essex, no doubt, carried young White over with him to England, whither he was at this time, as we have just seen, on the point of repairing. It is clear that he never had his boy with him in Ireland, and that neither wife nor child was with him at his death. But his last care and his last act were to write both to the Queen and to Burghley on the subject of his family.

His letter to Elizabeth is dated from Dublin Castle the 20th of September. It is very touching:—"The time is now come, my most gracious sovereign, by frailing of my fatal and deadly infirmity, that I should think only of my Saviour, and heavenly immortality; yet, while we remain in this corruptible flesh, the world requireth many Christian duties, whereof some, even in the pangs of death, I do now humbly offer unto your Highness. My estate of life, which, in mine conscience

the Earl published along with his Funeral Sermon, that signed R. B., in which we find the following lines:—

> Clotho colum tenuit post septem lustra per annum,
> Quinque dies Lachesis post hæc sua fila trahebat,
> Terque dies septem septeno mense videns heu
> Atropos eximii fulgentia lumina clausit.

This will agree with a statement in Collins (*Tit. Viscount Hereford*), which makes him to have been nineteen on the 6th of September 1560, excepting only that the 6th must be an error for the 16th.

* *Wright*, II. 25.

[belief], cannot be prolonged until the sun rise again, hath made me dedicate myself only to God, and generally to forgive and to ask forgiveness of the world, but, most especially of all creatures, to ask pardon of your Majesty for all offences that you have taken against me, not only for my last letters, wherewith I hear your Majesty was much grieved, but also for all other actions of mine that have been offensively conceived by your Majesty. My hard estate, most gracious sovereign, having, by great accompts, long ebbed, even almost to the low water mark, made me hope much of the floods of your abundance, which, when I saw were not, in mine own opinion, more than plentifully poured upon me, drave me to that which I dare not call plains [complaints], but, as a matter offering offence, do condemn it for error; yet pardonable, Madam, because I justify not my doing, but humbly ask forgiveness even at such a time as I can offend no more. My humble suit must yet extend itself further into many branches, for the behoof of my poor children, that, since God doth now make them fatherless, yet it will please your Majesty to be as a mother unto them, at the least by your gracious countenance and care of their education and matches. Mine eldest son, upon whom the continuance of my house remaineth, shall lead a life far unworthy his calling, and most obscurely, if it be not holpen by your Majesty's bounty and favour; for the smallness of his living, the greatness of my debt, and the dowries that go out of my lands, make the remainder little or nothing towards the reputation of an Earl's estate. But if it please your Majesty to grant to him my poor offices in Wales, the leading of

an hundred horse (under controlment, and by some sufficient soldiers) here in Ireland, for the guarding of the Northern Border, and his land upon the same, and withal would pardon my debt to your Majesty, it would not only be more than a recompence to me, but a most strong obligation whereby to tie him everlastingly to so gracious a prince; and yet your Majesty departs [parts] with no more to your poor kinsman than you must needs give to others, saving the debt already stated, which sum your Majesty shall, by your prerogative, receive of his living in his minority, or very near as much. I do not wish him mine office of Earl Marshal here, lest you should not think him worthy of the rest; but he is my son, and may be fit for more in his life than his unfortunate father hath in his possession at his death. I must end, as I think, both my letter and my life together; and therefore it is enough that to your Majesty I commit him, with humble petition that my Lord Treasurer [Burghley] and my Lord Chamberlain [the Earl of Sussex] may direct his education." The letter concludes with a request that her Majesty would think of his good friend, the Archbishop of Dublin, then beside him, and whose holy exhortations had encouraged him in the mortal strife he was then waging, for some other benefice in England. This was Archbishop Loftus; he was left to occupy the see of Dublin till his death in 1605. "He is a man," says Essex, "notable in his function, good in life and example, and hath served your Majesty truly in matters of this state. This is enough to a prince that nourisheth learned men, and rewardeth her servants." Then he concludes:

"The Lord God prosper your Majesty, send you a long and happy reign. And so I commit you humbly to him, and my poor children to you."*

The whole letter is beautiful and affecting in the highest degree; but especially admirable and noble is the delicacy with which one unhappy subject is touched upon. God hath made his poor children fatherless; and therefore he makes his humble suit that it will please her Majesty to be as a *mother* unto them. It is spoken so meekly and tenderly, with such freedom from all bitterness, as to express no reproach, but rather only pity, for her who ought to have been a mother to them. Afterwards, where the mention of the circumstance is necessary to explain the true state of his affairs, he speaks with the same composure of the dower that will have to be paid to his widow out of his son's scanty inheritance. And again, in another passage, he does not hesitate to remind her Majesty that his poor son is her kinsman, although the relationship was through the boy's mother. This is the reality of that Christian forgiveness, the parade of which, even from dying lips, is often no better than a form.

The letter to Burleigh is dated on the following day, the 21st. It begins:—"My good Lord, It were more reasonable that I framed my last speech unto you to this end only, to show myself thankful for your favours past, than to enter into new petitions at such a time as this, when you are sure that your thanks shall die with me; and that my son, by tenderness of years, is far

* *Murdin*, 301.

from discretion to judge of such friendship as I much desire to proceed from your lordship in his behalf." He has nevertheless, the dying Earl goes on to say, upon the assured confidence that Burghley's love to him shall descend to his children, directed his friend Mr. Waterhouse, by whom the letter was probably transmitted, to show his lordship how he may do good to his son Hereford, and bind him with perpetual friendship to his benefactor and his house. He would have wished the boy to be educated in Burghley's household, even if the care of him had not been allotted to his lordship as Master of the Wards. His desire is that the whole time of his minority which he may spend in England may be divided in attendance upon his lordship and the Earl of Sussex. "I assure myself in God," the letter concludes, "that he will raise up many friends to my posterity, and that this small persuasion shall be sufficient to move your lordship to do good to the son of him who lived and died your true and unfeigned friend. And so to the Lord I commit you, sequestering myself from henceforth from all worldly causes." In a postscript he expresses his desire that, as soon as Burghley and Sussex shall think his son fit to travel, he may be sent over to the Palgrave; "but," he adds, "whatsoever I write to the Queen's Majesty therein, I shall submit myself to your two opinions, as I would in all things if God had given me life."*

The Earl's body was brought over to England, and interred on the 26th of November in the parish church

* *Murdin*, 302.

of Caermarthen, his native place. A sermon was preached on the occasion by Dr. Richard Davies, Bishop of St. David's, which was soon after published, with a Dedication to the young Earl by his father's friend Waterhouse. The sermon is one of the dullest of such performances. All that is worth quoting of the Bishop's account of the deceased nobleman is contained in the following two or three sentences:—"First, I think I may say this much in a generality, that it was easy for a man of any judgment that should behold his countenance and behaviour to find in him nobility, majesty, and honor, planted by the especial gift of God even from his mother's womb . . . . . I have yet further to speak of his lordship, that I believe there be very few noblemen in England more ready and expert in chronicles, histories, genealogies, and petigrues [so the right reverend Welchman writes the word] of noblemen and noble houses, not only within the realm, but also in foreign realms, than this noble Earl was in his time. He excelled in descrying [descriving, or describing?] and blazing of arms, and in all skill pertaining thereto. And, to be short, his understanding and capacity was so lively and effectual that it reached to all kind of matters that a perfect nobleman shall have to deal withal in this world." This is not what Essex was, but only what he was to Bishop Davies, to whose discernment, and to the fashion of the time, we must impute whatever may seem less worthy in the studies and accomplishments so oddly selected for special enumeration.

Sir Edward Waterhouse, as he afterwards came to be,

was the one of all Essex's friends to whom he gave the most of his love and confidence. It has been suggested that the anonymous narrative of the Earl's last days may be his; but the manner in which he is mentioned in that account is, as well as perhaps other considerations, opposed to such a supposition. He is there designated the Earl's "dearly beloved Mr. Waterhouse," "to whom," we are told, "he would say, O my sweet Ned, farewell! My good Ned, thou art the faithfullest gentleman that ever I knew, and the friendliest, and the honestest;" "and often," it is added, "he desired to kiss him, which noble kisses pressed out tears, and made them to distil down by the cheeks of that gentleman." Waterhouse, however, was with his friend throughout his illness, and afterwards superintended the arrangements for the funeral. We find him writing to Burghley on the 15th of November from Chartley, in Staffordshire, whither, he says, he had come to attend the young Earl to the burial of his father; but, having conferred with the persons about him, and "understood by them the tenderness of his body," he had determined not to take him so long a journey in so inclement a season. He goes on to give Burghley an interesting account of the boy. Waterhouse having put into his hands a letter which he had brought from Burghley, he read it three or four times, and then said, "I am much bound to my Lord Treasurer; I will write an answer." This, accordingly, he forthwith did, "without help, or correcting of one word or syllable." Then he wrote two letters to two of his father's principal friends in Wales, excusing his absence from the

funeral. "He can express his mind," continues Waterhouse, "in Latin and French, as well as in English; very courteous and modest, rather disposed to hear than to answer, given greatly to learning, weak and tender, but very comely and beautiful. I think your lordship will as well like of him as of any that ever came within your charge." It has been affirmed that the elder of his two sons was not the one of whom the late Earl had had the highest hopes. "I must not smother," writes Sir Henry Wotton, speaking of the second Earl of Essex, to whom he had once been secretary, "what I have received by constant information, that his own father died with a very cold conceit of him; some say through the affection to his second son Walter Devereux, who was indeed a diamond of the time, and both of an hardy and delicate temper and mixture." * The boy's education, at all events, had been provided for by his father with great solicitude in the midst of all his other cares and anxieties. Waterhouse intimates that his schoolmaster, or tutor, who is the bearer of his letter to Burghley, had been carefully chosen by the late Earl from one of the colleges at Cambridge, of which he was a fellow; and he requests Burghley to employ his influence or authority as Chancellor of the University to procure from the head of his college a further toleration of his absence, inasmuch as "he is every way to be liked both for his learning, judgment, and acquaintance with the young Earl's disposition." †

Waterhouse's Dedication is more interesting than

* *Reliquiæ Wottonianæ*, 173. † *Wright*, II. 44.

the Bishop's sermon. He who is now Earl of Essex, Waterhouse urges, must not fall short of him who lately was so styled; rather the contrary. "For," he observes, "as your grandfather, who died in his young years, did make show of much more honour than was in the noble Viscount his father, and this our Earl by famous actions did altogether eclipse the virtuous hope conceived of your grandfather, so, considering that . . . you have more advantage of education, both by the place where you live, and by the honour and wisdom of your patrons, than your grandfather or father had, we cannot but hope of a further degree of excellency in you to outshine the goodness both of your father and grandfather." "Some people," he then proceeds, "there be, that can hardly discern between honour and profit, that do overmuch think of the disadvantage offered you by the Earl your father in diminishing some part of his patrimony in his foreign services, and will wish you perhaps, with a contrary course, to deserve more of your heir and worse of the world; but, as I wish in you a liberal frugality,—under this rule and protestation, that nothing can be profitable that is not honest,—so, to deserve well, as your father did, of your sovereign and country in matters appertaining to her Majesty's obedience, rather throw the helvē after the hatchet, and leave your ruins to be repaired by your prince, than anything to degenerate from honourable liberality." Her Majesty had herself in her letters called the late Earl "a rare jewel of her realm, and an ornament of her nobility." "Lastly, my Lord," the Dedication concludes, "have always before your eyes

the fear of God, and the counsel of the Earl your father at his death, that you should ever be mindful of the moment * of time assigned both to your father and grandfather, the eldest having attained but to six and thirty years, to the end that, upon consideration of the short course of life that you in nature are to look for, you may so employ your tender years in virtuous studies and exercises as you may in the prime of your youth become a man well accomplished to serve her Majesty and your country, as well in war as in peace." Thus, Waterhouse hopes, her Majesty may think hereafter of him whom he now addresses "as of a true servant and humble subject, one of the pillars of her estate, her Majesty's kinsman by many alliances, and the son of a most noble father." And much of the noble nature of the father did in due time revive in the son, although dashed with some vanity and weakness, that may have come from another stock. He proved also, alas, the heir of his father's short life and disastrous fortunes—of that doom of the son of Thetis which the boy was here warned, as it were by a voice from his father's grave, to consider as suspended over his race. One remarkable bodily feature he was noted to have derived

* That is, of the very short space. Camden has told the story, in two places (*Elizabeth*, 1576 and 1601), as if the Earl had warned his son to beware of the particular age of six-and-thirty as likely to be fatal to him. It appears, in fact, from what Waterhouse here says, that the Earl's father had not reached that age. Fuller (*Worthies, Caermarthenshire*) has repeated Camden's mistake, and added to it by making the three Devereuxes, who, he says, successively died at the fatal age of thirty-six, to have been the grandfather of the first Earl, his father, and himself, (instead of his father, himself, and his son). The first Earl's grandfather died an old man.

from his father, "the incomparable fairness and fine shape of his hands";*—a characteristic pronounced by a modern system of physiological speculation to be the surest sign in the human animal of pure blood and ancient lineage; improving upon which idea a still younger philosophy has learned to divine from the hand the whole man, physical, moral, and intellectual, by surely a sufficiently compendious rule of thumb.

Such, then, was the first Devereux, Earl of Essex. Such was his life, such his death. But we are not yet done with his death. We have seen the mysterious hint thrown out at the commencement of his account by the writer, whoever he was, of the narrative of his last illness:—"Or whether it were of any other accident, the living God both knoweth, and he will revenge it." Essex himself, it would appear, was not without his suspicions of foul play. Sir Nicholas White, who was much with him, distinctly states, in a letter to Burghley written from Dublin eight days after his death, that the Earl doubted he had been poisoned, and at the same time expressed his conviction that it was no Irish enemy who had so sought his life; no, not Tirlough Lennough himself, he said, would do any villany to his person.† White adds, that, when the body was opened, all the inward parts, as he had been informed, were found in a sound state, "saving that his heart was somewhat consumed, and the bladder of his gall empty." But the belief, or suspicion, of poison still survived. Sidney, the Lord Deputy, upon his

* *Reliquiæ Wottonianæ*, 170. † *Wright*, II. 35.

return to Dublin from Connaught on the 13th of October, found the rumour so rife, that he deemed it necessary to have a formal examination instituted; and he communicated the result to Walsingham on the 20th of the same month in a long letter, or dispatch, which he requested the Secretary to lay before the Lords of the Council. Sidney affirms that there was no appearance of the Earl having died of poison, no ground for suspecting such to have been the case. From the time he arrived in Dublin he had been attended by an Irish physician, whom the Earl of Ormond had sent to him, by Dr. Trevor, an Oxford man, Sidney's own physician, by Mr. Chaloner, the Irish Secretary of State, whom Sidney describes as "not unlearned in physic, and one that often for good will giveth counsel to his friends in cases of sickness," and by Mr. Knell, an honest preacher of Dublin and a chaplain of his own, as well as a professor of physic; all these persons were constantly with him, but they never administered to him anything against poison. He himself, when "drawing towards his end, being specially asked by the Archbishop of Dublin whether he thought that he was poisoned or no, constantly affirmed that he thought he was not." Yet afterwards it is admitted that the rumour of his having been poisoned had arisen from "some words spoken by himself, and yet not originally conceived by himself, as it is thought by the wisest here, and those that were continually about him; but one that was very near him at that time, and whom he entirely trusted, seeing him in extreme pain, . . . said to him, By the Mass, my

Lord, you are poisoned; whereupon the yeoman of his cellar was presently sent for to him, and mildly and lovingly he questioned with him, saying that he sent not for him to burthen him, but to excuse him." The man declared that, if the Earl had taken any hurt by his wine, the guilt must be his; "for, my Lord," he said, "since you gave me warning in England to be careful of your drink, you have drunk none but it passed my hands." He was certain also that the water which the Earl always drank with his wine was perfectly good. The sugar, too, "fair though it were not," was yet wholesome enough, "or else it had been likely that a great many should have had a shrewd turn," for it was the same that had been used almost for a twelve-month past by all the Lord Deputy's household. It is added that the physicians, upon being asked what they meant by suggesting that this thing or that thing might have poisoned him, declared "that they never thought it, but for argument's sake, and partly to please the Earl." Sidney then mentions a remarkable fact. The night on which the Earl was first taken ill, in his own house in Ulster, he had had two gentlewomen at supper with him, who had both afterwards been affected as if they had taken something that disagreed with them; they soon got well, however, and came to visit him at Dublin, when he remarked to them that he feared they and he, and also his page, had tasted of one drug. "The women," adds Sidney, "upon his words were afraid, but never sick, and be in as good state of health as they were before they supped with him." Knell the preacher, too, it seems, had, upon suspicion that he

might have been poisoned, several times given him unicorn's horn.* So Sidney was told. But Knell, it afterwards appears, had gone farther than this. On the 4th of February, 1577 we find Sidney writing as follows to his brother-in-law, Leicester, who had evidently taken a peculiar interest in the affair:—"I trust I have satisfied your lordship with my writing, and others [other writings, probably the certificates of the physicians], by my procurement, sent by Pakenham, touching the false and malicious bruit of the Earl of Essex' poisoning. If not, what you will have more done shall be done. I am sorry I hear not how you like of what I have done, and the more for that I am advertised of Pagnaney's arrival there. I would not have doubted to have made Knell to have retracted his inconsiderate and foolish speech and writing; but God hath prevented me by taking him away, dying of the same disease that the Earl died." † Sir Henry goes on to say that the disease was one common in Ireland, and that many persons had died of it in the latter part of the preceding year, some of them belonging to his own household, without any suspicion of poison. What Knell is here spoken of as having written was probably the narrative of the Earl's illness. Several manuscript copies of that paper are in existence, so that it was probably widely disseminated, though withheld from the press. It is said to be in some copies addressed to the Earl of Sussex.

A few years after this, however, the story was boldly

* *Sidney Papers*, I. 140—142. † *Sidney Papers*, I. 88

given to the world, in abundant detail, and without any reservation. It was in the year 1584 that the English reading public was startled by the appearance of the famous book since commonly known by the name of *Leicester's Commonwealth* (in the original edition, *The copy of a Letter written by a Master of Art at Cambridge*, &c.), perhaps the most fearless and thorough-going attack upon a living character ever published. The version here given of the poisoning of the Earl of Essex was in substance as follows:—It was the contrivance and work of Leicester, who had been for some time carrying on an intrigue with the Countess of Essex. Leicester's instruments were two of his victim's own servants, Lloyd, his secretary, and Crompton, yeoman of his bottles,—the same, we may suppose, who appears in Sir Henry Sidney's account under the designation of yeoman of the cellar,—whom Lloyd had seduced; the poison was prepared by an Italian surgeon, a cunning man, who had recently come over and attached himself to Leicester, and was administered in a cup of wine "at *Penteneis* [*Penteney's?*] the merchant's house in Dublin upon the quay." Is not *Penteney*, in all probability, the same person whom we find mentioned under the name of *Pagnaney* in Sir Henry Sidney's letter to Leicester, quoted above, and whose voyage to England is spoken of as of importance in connection with the rumours about the poisoning? "And there was poisoned at the same time," the story proceeds, "and by the same cup, as given of courtesy by the Earl, one Mrs. Alice Draycot, a godly gentlewoman, whom the Earl affectioned much; who, departing thence

towards her own house, which was eighteen miles off, . . . began to fall sick very grievously upon the way, and continued, with increase of pains, and excessive torments by vomiting, until she died, which was the Sunday before the Earl's death, ensuing the Friday after; and, when she was dead, her body was swollen unto a monstrous bigness and deformity; whereof the good Earl hearing the day following, lamented the case greatly, and said, in the presence of his servants, Ah, poor Alice, the cup was not prepared for thee, albeit it were thy hard destiny to taste thereof. Young Honnies also, whose father is master of the children of her Majesty's chapel, being at that time page to the said Earl, and accustomed to take the taste of his drink (though since entertained also, among other, by my Lord of Leicester, for better covering of matters), by his taste that he then took of the compound cup (though in very small quantity, as you know the fashion is) yet was he like to have lost his life, but escaped in the end, being young, with the loss only of his hair; which the Earl perceiving, and taking compassion of the youth, called for a cup of drink a little before his death, and drunk to Honnies, saying, I drink to thee, my Robin, and be not afeard; for this is a better cup of drink than that whereof thou tookest the taste when we were both poisoned, and whereby thou hast lost thy hair and I must lose my life. This hath young Honnies reported openly in divers places, and before divers gentlemen of worship, sithence his coming into England."*

* *Copy of a Letter*, 31.

This, it is to be remembered, is an account given several years after the time when the facts are alleged to have occurred, and of course without the assistance of the documentary information of which we are now in possession. It is plainly erroneous in various particulars; but its mistakes may be fairly regarded as only the exaggerations and partial perversions which such a story would naturally receive in its unwritten state. They do not look like inventions of the narrator. They are misrepresentations; but we can trace nearly all of them to the actual facts, of which they are the distorted shadows; and both the coincidences and even the discordances so detected furnish strong evidence that the writer has in the main only reported what he had heard, and what was in general circulation. The facts, in most cases, would have suited his purpose as well, or nearly as well, in their true form as in the misshapen state in which he gives them. He gains nothing, for instance, by reducing the two gentlewomen who supped with the Earl in his own house to one Mrs. Alice Drayton, who drank of the same wine with him at Dublin; and, for the sake of his own credit, he would never have made the lady to have died if he had known that she had been only affected with a slight illness, from which she soon recovered. What the Earl said when the two ladies visited him, is evidently what had given rise to the fable of his lament on being told that Mrs. Drayton was dead. The circumstance of the page having partaken of the supposed poison is in like manner found also in the Lord Deputy's account. And most curious of all these correspondences is the mention

by Sidney, in his letter to Leicester, of the person whom he calls Pagnaney, if our conjecture be well-founded, that that is the same person who appears in the other account as Penteney, the merchant of Dublin.

§ 2.

The poisoning of Essex was not the first, nor even the second murder with which Leicester had already been charged by the *vox populi*. Robert Dudley, as he was originally called, was the fifth of the eight sons of John Dudley, Earl of Warwick, and finally Duke of Northumberland, whose father, Edmund Dudley, the notorious minister of Henry the Seventh, was beheaded on Tower Hill, in August, 1510, and who himself underwent the same fate on the same spot in August, 1553, as did his sixth son, the Lord Guildford Dudley in February following, immediately before his wife, the hapless Lady Jane Grey, the young, the high-born, the beautiful, the learned, the gentle, was led out to her doom on the green within the Tower. Leicester's early experience of life had thus been, not sprinkled with, but drenched in blood. If the Duke's third son, John, as is asserted, was in his twenty-fourth year when he died in October, 1554, Robert cannot well have been born before 1531 or 1532; but I do not know that there is any other ground than this calculation for placing his birth so late. It appears, at any rate, that by the year 1550 he had received the honour of knighthood: we find King Edward the Sixth recording in his Journal, under date of the fourth of

June in that year, that "Sir Robert Dudley, third [surviving] son to the Earl of Warwick, married [in presence of the Court at Sheen, or Richmond] Sir John Robsart's daughter; after which marriage there were certain gentlemen that did strive who should first take away a goose's head which was hanged alive on two cross posts." The reader perceives already that the real circumstances of this marriage of Dudley with Amy Robsart were altogether different from those out of which the great modern romancist has woven his exciting fiction. Nor was the bride's father an obscure Devonshire knight, as Scott makes him, but the head of a most distinguished family seated in the county of Norfolk. He seems to have been dead when his daughter's marriage took place; and to have died, moreover, in circumstances which forfeited his estates to the crown. Possibly, Northumberland had the recovery of these estates in view when he married his son to Robsart's daughter; and in 1557, in the reign of Philip and Mary, the Lord Robert Dudley had a grant for life of what appears to have been the principal one, called Sedistern, of which accordingly, he retained possession till his death. It then went to the cousin and heir of Amy Robsart, John Walpole, Esquire, of Houghton, from whom it descended to his great-great-great-grandson Sir Robert Walpole, the prime minister.* Sir Robert Walpole and

* *Blomfield's Norfolk*, continued by Parkin, III. 851—853. Sedistern is commonly stated to have gone to Walpole upon the death of Dudley's wife; but this appears to be a mistake. It is remarkable that Parkin makes no mention of Robsart's knighthood; he speaks of him as having been styled, after his death, John Robsart, late of Wyndham, in Norfolk, Esq., alias of Stanfeld in the parish of Wymundham.

Amy Robsart! Such are the fantastic conjunctions which family history is continually disclosing. The minister was actually the representative of the heroine of romance, being her first cousin only five times removed.

Lord Robert Dudley, as he was then styled, was, as well as his two elder brothers, indicted of high treason along with their father in the first year of Mary, and, having been found or confessed themselves guilty, they were all sentenced to die; but, after spending about a year in the Tower, they were set at liberty, and Robert, having not only conformed to the restored religion but greatly ingratiated himself both with Queen Mary and King Philip, was soon after appointed by Her Majesty to the important post of Master of the Ordnance. He was not, however, for all this the less ready, on the accession of a new sovereign, for a new religion and new preferment. It seemed to be the extraordinary destiny of this family, that its fortunes should alternately brighten and darken with the successive changes in the occupation of the throne: it had been elevated by Henry the Seventh, thrown down by Henry the Eighth, raised again by Edward the Sixth, once more struck to the ground by Mary, and now it was to be lifted up to a greater height than ever by Elizabeth.

The Lord Robert, however, was a personage to make his way at any court, more especially at the court of any female sovereign, most of all at that of the Maiden Queen, whose admiration of male beauty seems, curiously enough, to have been, not in inverse, but in direct proportion to her determined chastity, as if her resolution never to marry had given her a more than

ordinary feeling of security and self-confidence, or as if she revenged herself for her abstinence from matrimony by indulging with the more adventurous license in coquetry. The first requisite to attract and attach her Dudley is reported to have possessed in an eminent degree, a showy figure and handsome countenance; though, if we may judge from his common portrait, the expression conveyed by the *tout ensemble* of his high forehead, arched nose, and flashing eye was rather haughty and insolent than noble or refined, if indeed we should not characterise it as sensual and animal. But perhaps this coarse, defiant, one might almost say, scowling air had only gathered upon his features in his more advanced years. Naunton's report is that he was in his youth of a sweet aspect; though latterly he grew high-coloured and red-faced.* I am not aware of any authority for the common notion of the swarthiness of his complexion; his enemy the Earl of Sussex in calling him the Gypsy seems to have alluded to a darkness of another kind. It is evident from all we know of him that he must have possessed extraordinary plausibility and power of insinuation; but altogether his mental endowments and acquirements were of a much higher order than has generally been supposed. His letters, great numbers of which remain, while they attest his perfect command and habitual and lavish employment of all the arts of the courtier, sufficiently prove at the same time his abundant resources both of general intellectual ability and of literary skill. All these natural advantages his ambition and his taste for display and

* *Fragmenta Regalia.*

magnificence insured his turning to the best account. Elizabeth had no sooner mounted the throne than the brilliant Dudley shone forth as first favourite. He was immediately appointed to the office of Master of the Horse; other honours quickly followed; and in the beginning of June 1559, by the time the new reign was about six months old, he was installed a Knight of the Garter and sworn a member of the Privy Council.

All this while what was become of his wife? It has been said that he kept her in seclusion in the country; and we do not hear of the Lady Robert Dudley (Amy Robsart never was Countess of Leicester) being ever seen at Court. But, even if she never was there, there was not in that anything extraordinary. Lord Clarendon, after telling us that his grandfather in the time of Elizabeth served as a burgess in many parliaments, states that from the death of that Queen he never was in London, though he lived thirty years thereafter; "and his wife," he adds, "who was married to him above forty years, never was in London in her life; the wisdom and frugality of that time being such, that few gentlemen made journeys to London, or any other expensive journeys, but upon important business, and their wives never; by which providence they enjoyed and improved their estates in the country and kept good hospitality in their houses, brought up their children well, and were beloved by their neighbours." * From the only authentic memorial that we have of Dudley's first wife we might almost conclude that she was a wife of this plain and primitive model. It is a letter in her

* *Life*, I. 3.

own handwriting preserved among Le Neve's Manuscripts in the Museum. An actual letter of Amy Robsart's, presenting the very characters traced by those fingers of hers, the very "paper she writ on," so many long years ago, is an interesting thing to look upon. The letter does not convey much positive information, but still it affords us a glimpse into her way of life. It is addressed on the back "To my very friend Mr. Flowerdew, the elder, give this; Norfolk;" and it runs as follows:—"Mr. Flowerdew, I understand by Gryse that you put him in remembrance of that you spake to me of, concerning the going of certain sheep at Systorne [Sedistern?]; and, although I forgot to move my Lord before his departing, he being sore troubled with weighty affairs, and I not being altogether in quiet for his sudden departing, yet notwithstanding, knowing your accustomed friendship towards my Lord and me, I neither may nor can deny you that request in my Lord's absence of mine own authority, yea an it were a greater matter, as, if any good occasion may serve you, so try me; desiring you further that you will make sale of the wool so soon as is possible, although you sell it for six shillings the stone, or as you would sell for yourself; for my Lord so earnestly required me at his departing to see those poor men satisfied as though it had been a matter depending upon life; wherefore I force not to sustain a little loss thereby, to satisfy my Lord's desire; and so to send that money to Gryse's house to London, by Bridewell, to whom my Lord hath given order for the payment thereof. And thus I end, always troubling you, wishing that occasion serve me to requite you:

until that time I must pay you with thanks. And so to God I leave you. From Mr. Hyde's, this vii. of August. Your assured during life, AMYE DUDLEY." *

The Lady Robert's penmanship is somewhat formal and angular, very unlike the light, swift-flowing caligraphy of her lord. But, although perhaps not a very practised writer, she expresses herself after the fashion of an educated person. Her letter, too, is full both of good feeling and good sense. One would not infer from it that the writer either lived unhappily with her husband, or was excluded from participation in his affairs; rather the reverse of both these things. Nor, probably, was the letter written in the earlier days of their union; it bears no trace of so extreme a crisis as that in which Dudley and all his race were involved at the commencement of Mary's reign; if the weighty affairs with which he was sore troubled before his departing (apparently for the court) were, as seems most likely, affairs of state, they can only have come upon him after he became an important political personage under Elizabeth. This would make poor Amy Robsart's letter, so expressive of affection and simple trustfulness, to have been written most probably in the last year of her life.

It may be that she and her husband never met again. It is certain that he was not with her when she died, suddenly, on the 8th of September, 1560. But it is not

* *Wright*, I. 49 (Collated with the original, in *Harl. MS.* 4712. Mr. Flowerdew the elder was probably the father of Edward Flowerdew who was appointed a Baron of the Exchequer in 1584.

so certain that some emissaries and instruments of his were not too near to her.

That strange rumours immediately arose and spread far and near there is abundant evidence on record, and also that they were not confined to the credulity of the mere multitude. On the 17th of September Thomas Lever, the eminent Puritan preacher, a man of high academical station, writes from Coventry to Sir Francis Knollys and Secretary Cecil as follows:—"Here in these parts seemeth unto me to be a grievous and dangerous suspicion and muttering of the death of her which was the wife of my Lord Robert Dudley. And now my desire and trust is, that, the rather by your godly discreet device and diligence, through the Queen's Majesty's authority, earnest searching and trying out of the truth, with due punishment if any be found guilty in this matter, may be openly known. For, if no search nor inquire be made and known, the displeasure of God, the dishonour of the Queen, and the danger of the whole realm is to be feared; and by due inquire, and justice openly known, surely God shall be well pleased and served, the Queen's Majesty worthily commended, and her loving subjects comfortably quieted."*

Lever's guarded language would be sufficiently intelligible to both Knollys and Cecil. His pointed allusions to their royal mistress might be interpreted by, or might themselves serve to interpret, the following passage in a letter which Cecil had had nine months

* *Haynes*, 362.

before from Sir Thomas Chaloner, then residing as our ambassador at Brussels:—"I assure you, Sir, these folks [the people of this country] are broad-mouthed [plain-spoken], where I spake of one so much in favour, as they esteem. I think ye guess whom they named; if ye do not, I will upon my net [next?] letters write further. To tell you what I conceive; as I count the slander most false, so a young Princess cannot be too ware what countenance or familiar demonstration she maketh more to one than another. I judge no one man's service in the realm worth the entertainment, with such a tale [or, perhaps, tail] of obloquy, or occasion of speech to such men as of evil will are ready to find faults. This delay of ripe time for marriage, besides the loss of the realm, (for without posterity of her Highness what hope is left unto us?) ministereth matter to these lewd [base] tongues to descant upon, and breedeth contempt. I would I had but one hour's talk with you. Think, if I trusted not your good nature, I would not write thus much; which, nevertheless, I humbly pray you to reserve as written to yourself."* This can refer to nobody but Dudley, her majesty's fondness for whom, we see, was matter of popular talk and general belief, not only in England but in foreign countries, long before the death of his wife.

A curious version of the same scandal is preserved in certain papers emitted by one Arthur Gunter, a servant of the Earl of Arundel (Henry Fitzalan, the

* *Haynes*, 212.

eighteenth Earl), who, apparently without ever having had any chance, lived in the hope of marrying Elizabeth for many years. Gunter's several statements are without dates; but they are given by Haynes under the year 1560. In that entitled his *Declaration*, which is addressed to the Lords of the Council, he says:—"Pleaseth your Honours to understand, that about three weeks since I chanced to be a hunting with divers gentlemen, where I fell in talk with a gentleman named Mr. George Cotton, who told me that it chanced the Queen's Highness to be at supper on a time at my Lord Robert's house, where it chanced her Highness to be nighted homeward [benighted on her return home]; and, as her Grace was going homeward by torch-light, her Highness fell in talk with them that carried the torches, and said that her Grace would make their lord [Dudley] the best that ever was of his name. Whereupon I said that her Grace must make him then a Duke. And he said, that the report was, that her Highness should marry him. And I answered, I pray God all be for the best; and I pray God all men may take it well, that there might rise no trouble thereof. And so have I said to divers others since that time. And I most humbly beseech your Honours all to be good unto me, and to pardon me herein if I have offended." * In a subsequent paper, entitled his *Confession*, Gunter adds, among other things:—"Farther, as touching my Lord Robert, I have said to Mr. Cotton that I thought him to be the cause that my Lord, my

* *Haynes*, 365.

master, might not marry the Queen's Highness; wherefore I would that he had been put to death with his father, or that some ruffian would have despatched him by the way, as he hath gone, with some dag or gun."*

But the most remarkable document bearing upon this matter that has come down to us is a letter dated the 30th of November, 1560, to Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, then ambassador in France, from his secretary Mr. R. J. Jones, whom Throckmorton, acting in concert with Cecil, had sent over from Paris to put Elizabeth in full possession of the reports that were current, and, as far as might be, to ascertain how matters really stood between her Majesty and Dudley. On the 28th of October, Throckmorton had written to Cecil;—"I looked by your last to be somewhat satisfied and resolved touching the greatest matter of all, I mean the Queen's marriage. I know not what to think, nor how to understand your letter in that point. And the bruits be so brim, and so maliciously reported here, touching the marriage of the Lord Robert and the death of his wife, as I know not where to turn me, nor what countenance to bear." Throckmorton goes on to say to Cecil confidentially that, although he likes Dudley in some respects well, and esteems him for many good parts and gifts of nature that be in him, and wishes him well to do, yet his duty and affection to her majesty shall ever weigh with him beyond any private friendship; and he urges his colleague, in the strongest terms that he can employ, to endeavour to hinder the apprehended marriage.

* *Haynes*, 365.

"For, if it take place," he goes on, "there is no counsel nor advice that can help. . . . As we begin already to be in derision and hatred for the bruit only, and nothing taken here on this side more assured than our destruction, so, if it take place, we shall be *opprobrium hominum et abjectio plebis*;. . . the Queen our sovereign discredited, contemned, and neglected; our country ruined, undone, and made prey. Wherefore, with tears and sighs, as one being already almost confounded, I beseech you again and again, set to your wits and all your help to stay the commonwealth, which lieth now in great hazard."* Jones arrived at the English court on the evening of Monday the 25th of November. On the next day all the Lords of the Council dined at the lodging of the Scotch ambassador, "where," says Jones, "they were very highly feasted." And then he proceeds:—"I repaired thither to show myself to my Lords; where, after I had attended half dinner time, my Lord Robert rose up and went to the court, and in the way sent a gentleman back to will me to repair thither after him, as I did after I had declared the message to Mr. Secretary. Being come unto him, he asked me whether the French Queen had said that the Queen's Majesty would marry her horse-keeper, and told me he had seen all the discourse of your lordship's proceedings, together with the intelligence, and that Mr. Secretary told him that the French Queen had said so. I answered, that I said no such matter. He laid the matter upon me so strong as, the author thereof being avowed, I would not deny

* *Hardwicke*, I. 123.

that the French Queen had said that the Queen would marry the Master of her Horses. This was all he said to me; and he willed me that I should in no case let it be known to Mr. Secretary that he had told me thus much, as I have not indeed, nor mean not to do." In point of fact, Jones had previously told Cecil what the French Queen (Mary Stuart) was reported to have said, and at Cecil's desire had made a statement of the matter in writing, which the Secretary had communicated to Elizabeth, and she, as Jones inferred, to Dudley. Jones was admitted to an audience by Elizabeth, at six o'clock on the evening of Wednesday, the 27th, at Greenwich, whither she had come to sleep from Eltham, after having dined, and hunted all day "with divers of my Lords." Half led on by her Majesty, the dexterous emissary was not long in making his way to his main business. "When I came," he writes, "to touch nearer the quick, I have heard of this before, quoth she, and he need not to have sent you withal. I said that the care you had was so great, as you could not but advertise her Majesty of such things as might touch her, and that you took this to be no matter to be opened but to herself. When I came to the point that touched his race, which I set forth in as vehement terms as the case required, and that the Duke's [Dudley's father, the Duke of Northumberland's] hatred was rather to her than to the Queen her sister, she laughed, and forthwith turned herself to the one side and to the other, and set her hand upon her face. She thereupon told me that the matter [of the death of Dudley's wife] had been tried in the country, and found to be

contrary to that which was reported; saying, that he was then in the Court, and none of his at the attempt at his wife's house, and that it fell out as should neither touch his honesty nor her honour." Afterwards, when Jones quoted to her Majesty an expression of the Venetian Ambassador, who had described Dudley as *veneficii et malificii reus* (a man charged both with poisoning and witchcraft), she made him repeat the words several times, and seemed more moved by them than by anything he had previously said. In conclusion, he writes—"The Queen's Majesty looketh not so hearty and well as she did, by a great deal; and surely the matter of my Lord Robert doth much perplex her, and it is never like to take place, and the talk thereof is somewhat slack, as generally misliked, but of the setters forth thereof, who are as your lordship knoweth."*

It has been conjectured from her Majesty's expression about the matter having been tried in the country, that probably a coroner's inquest was held upon the body of Dudley's wife.† Her death was certainly sudden, even if it was not the effect of violence or foul play. It is said, indeed, that in the spring of 1559 she had been seriously ill with a complaint in the chest, and that her husband at one time had hopes of getting rid of her

* *Hardwicke*, I. 167.

† In a note to *Pepys's Diary*, for 24th November, 1665, the Editor states that among the manuscripts in the Pepysian Library, at Cambridge, is "an account of the coroner's inquest held upon the Countess of Leicester [meaning the Lady Robert Dudley] at Cumnor." A search, however, which has been recently made has failed in discovering any such manuscript.

through that malady, from which, however, she appears to have recovered. Camden says, simply, that she was killed by falling from a precipitous height.* The story told by the author of *Leicester's Commonwealth* is, that Dudley, desiring to have her out of the way, that he might marry her Majesty, sent her to reside in the house of his servant Forster, of Cumnor, near Oxford, "where shortly after she had the chance to fall from a pair of stairs, and so to break her neck, but yet without hurting of her hood that stood upon her head;" that Sir Richard Varney, by commandment, remained with her all that day alone, with one man-servant only, all the other servants having been sent away to a market two miles off; that the man, being afterwards apprehended for a felony in the Marches of Wales, and threatening to reveal the manner in which she was murdered, was privately made away with in prison; that Varney himself died about the same time in London, crying piteously and blaspheming God, and that he said to a gentleman of worship of the author's acquaintance, not long before his death, that all the devils in hell were tearing him in pieces; finally, that the wife of Bald Butler, a kinsman of Dudley's, declared the whole fact a short time before her death.

This is the basis of the account given by Elias Ashmole, who has, however, added some particulars collected from the tradition still preserved at Cumnor in the latter part of the seventeenth century. Ashmole calls Dudley's servant Anthony Forster: his monument

* In the original, "*præcipitio perierat.*" *Annal.* 102.

was then, and perhaps is still, to be seen on the north wall of the chancel of the village church, exhibiting his effigy in armour and that of his wife in the habit of the time, with a long Latin poetical inscription in which he is stated to have been lord of the manor of Cumnor, and a gentleman by birth, being the youngest of the four sons of Richard Forster, Esquire, of Iflet (*Iphlethae*) in Shropshire, and is celebrated for every corporeal, intellectual, moral, and spiritual gift, in particular for his piety, his charity to the poor, his eloquence, his skill in music, gardening, and architecture, and the various languages he could speak and write. In so far at least as the enumeration of his tastes, or habits, and accomplishments goes, this record of the man can hardly be supposed to be quite a fiction; but it had not been able to preserve his memory in much fragrance among the inhabitants of Cumnor, the dead language to which it had been confided probably proving in that locality particularly dead. Ashmole describes the ruins of Forster's house as standing at the west end of the parish church. The manor, he says, had anciently belonged to the monks of Abingdon, having, according to some, been what was called a cell of their monastery. One of the rooms was still known as Dudley's chamber, being that in which Dudley's wife was murdered. Varney had first, by Dudley's order, attempted to poison her, a fact which was proved by the testimony of Dr. Walter Bayley, sometime Fellow of New College, then residing in Oxford, and Professor of Physic in that University; he had been sent for by Varney and requested to prescribe a potion for the poor lady, which

he had refused to do, having reason to believe that Varney and his confederates designed to have added to it some ingredient which would have materially altered its effect, and that so "he might after have been hanged for a colour of their sin." They had previously endeavoured in vain to persuade her to take a draught of their own preparing to relieve her melancholy, when they saw her sad and heavy, "as one that well knew by her other handling that her death was not far off." Ashmole makes Forster also to have remained with her on the day of her death, as well as Varney and the man servant; the other servants, he says, were sent to Abingdon market. The tradition of the place was that she was conveyed by her three murderers from the chamber where she usually lay "to another where the bed's head of the chamber stood close to a privy postern door, where they in the night came and stifled her in her bed, bruised her head very much, broke her neck, and at length flung her down stairs." In addition to what befel Varney and the servant man, we are told that "Forster, likewise, after this fact, being a man formerly addicted to hospitality, company, mirth, and music, was afterwards observed to forsake all this, and with much melancholy and pensiveness (some say with madness) pined and drooped away." "Neither," Ashmole concludes, "are these following passages to be forgotten, that, as soon as ever she was murdered, they made great haste to bury her before the coroner had given in his inquest (which the Earl himself condemned as not done advisedly); which her father, or Sir John Robertsett (as I suppose), hearing

of, came with all speed hither, caused her corpse to be taken up, the coroner to sit upon her, and further inquiry to be made concerning this business to the full. But it was generally thought that the Earl stopped his mouth, and made up the business betwixt them. And the good Earl, to make plain to the world the great love he bare to her while alive, and what a grief the loss of so virtuous a lady was to his tender heart, caused (though the thing, by these and other means, was beaten into the heads of the principal men of the University of Oxford,) her body to be reburied in St. Mary's Church in Oxford with great pomp and solemnity. It is remarkable, when Dr. Babington, the Earl's chaplain, did preach the funeral sermon, he tripped once or twice in his speech, by recommending to their memories that virtuous lady so pitifully *murdered,* instead of saying pitifully slain."* This is evidently an abundantly credulous and blundering narrative. It is certain, for one thing, that there could have been no interference in the matter on the part of Sir John Robsart, who, as we have seen, was in his grave long ago. A letter written at the time, also, to the Earl of Sussex by his court correspondent, W. Honning, would seem to make it probable that there had been no double interment. Dating from Hampton Court, the 6th of October, Honning writes: —"This said bearer seeth the Court stuffed with mourners, yea many of the better sort in degree, for the Lord Robert's wife, who was, upon the mischancing

* *Antiquities of Berkshire,* I. 149.

death, buried in the head church of the University of Oxford. The cost of the funeral esteemed at better than two thousand pounds."* This was at any rate putting a bold face upon the business.

Improbable, however, or at least unproven, as it may be thought, Dudley never got over this dark imputation. We may see how it clung to him, and may besides gather some other particulars of the estimation in which he was secretly held by many, from a remarkable paper drawn up by Cecil in April 1566, in which he enumerates the following reasons against the marriage of the Queen with the Earl of Leicester: "1. Nothing is increased by marriage of him either in riches, estimation, power; 2. It will be thought that the slanderous speeches of the Queen with the Earl have been true; 3. He shall study nothing but to enhance his own particular friends to wealth, to offices, to lands, and to offend others; 4. *He is infamed by death of his wife;* 5. He is far in debt; 6. He is like to prove unkind, or jealous of the Queen's Majesty." †

Whether such considerations as these had any share in preventing Elizabeth from marrying Dudley may be more than doubted. For all the pleasure she took in his society, loving him, as Camden has it, "at such a rate as if a secret conjunction of their planets had formed as mysterious a sympathy between their souls," ‡ it is probable that she expressed her real feelings and her fixed determination when, as the same historian elsewhere tells us, on one of her ladies of the bedchamber

* *Wright*, I. 47. † *Haynes*, 444. ‡ *Elizabeth*, 549.

once covertly commending the favourite as a fit partner of her throne, she answered in a passion, "Dost thou think me so unlike myself, and so unmindful of my royal majesty, that I would prefer my servant, whom I myself have raised, before the greatest princes of Christendom, in my choosing of a husband?"* She may have had both vanity and sensibility enough; but the central and ruling element of her character was love of power; she was never formed to share her regal authority with any one, and that she herself well knew. At any rate, her own account of her relations with Dudley was unvarying. Her reply to the bed-chamber woman appears to have been made in 1577 or 1578; in September 1564 she had made Cecil write as follows to Christopher Mundt, her agent in Germany:—*Nihil magis certe possum scribere, &c.*, that is, literally, "I can assure you of nothing with more perfect certainty than that my own belief is that she will rather marry any foreign prince than a subject of her own, and that, the more distinguished and illustrious the individual who aspires to her may be in descent, dominion, and person, the greater will be his chance of obtaining her. I cannot deny, indeed, but that that noble person of our country (*quin is nobilis noster*) respecting whom no slight expectation has been entertained among us, namely the Lord Robert, is worthy of such estimation as to deserve to be husband to the Queen; but I know that the single circumstance of his having been born her Majesty's subject would be a

* *Elizabeth*, 461.

bar to him, and by reason of that name of subject alone, which his birth attaches to him, he must be regarded as unsuitable to be her Majesty's husband.* Nevertheless by reason of his virtues, and his extraordinary and heroic endowments both of mind and body, he is deservedly so dear to the Queen, that if he were her brother (*fratrem germanum*) she could not love him more. On which account people who do not thoroughly know her Majesty are frequently wont to conjecture that she will marry him; but I see and understand that she takes delight in him solely on account of his most honourable and rare virtues, and that nothing more is practised in their intercourse than what is consistent with virtue and as remote in its nature as possible from the grosser sort of love." †

Cecil, indeed, though he wrote thus to Mundt *jussu Reginæ* (or by the Queen's command), as he has taken care to record on his rough draught or private copy of the paper, evidently still had his fears or suspicions; but he was timid by nature, and his position made him more so. In all probability, there never really was any danger of her Majesty making Dudley, or indeed any one else, her lord to rule over her. As mere favourite, however, or even, in a certain dubious and undefined sense, as lover or suitor, Dudley was perhaps more acceptable to her than any other individual ever was.

* Cecil's Latin is not very classical or even perfectly grammatical; but such seems to be the meaning of "Verum hoc unicum illi fore impedimentum, quod natus sit subesse Reginæ, solumque eo nomine propter ortum suum impar esse videtur Reginæ ut sit maritus."

† *Haynes*, 420.

With a few brief interruptions, his ascendancy lasted as long as he lived. Nothing either that he did himself, or that others did, could permanently affect it. The worst imputations or surmises that cast their shadows upon his character scarcely ever eclipsed him for more than a few days or weeks to the eye of his royal mistress. Even in November, 1560, in the midst of the universal clamour, at home and abroad, which had arisen on the death of his wife, and which seemed to Jones, Throckmorton's secretary, to have visibly impaired her Majesty's health, he notes that "yet the favours be great which are showed him (the Lord Robert) at the Queen's Majesty's hands." Soon after this her bounty fell upon him in a deluge. In 1562 the old family dignity of Earl of Warwick was restored to his elder brother, the Lord Ambrose Dudley, with remainder to the Lord Robert. The same year the Lord Robert received a grant of the Castle and Manor of Kenilworth, and other lands of great extent and value in Warwickshire and various other counties. Consequent upon these favours from the crown came immediately his election as High Steward of the University of Cambridge, and a long list of minor stewardships, many of them places of profit, as well as of honour, from ecclesiastical bodies, civic corporations, and individuals, all eager to make a friend of the man who was popularly styled the Heart of the Court, and was believed to be the most powerful subject in the kingdom. At the same time sundry trading licenses and grants of monopolies increased his revenues, and helped to maintain his boundless expenditure, though

not sufficing, it would appear, to keep him out of debt. Among other grants that he had was one of Windsor Park, conceived in the most ample terms. At last, in September, 1564, after having been proposed as a husband to the Queen of Scots, he was ennobled by the title of Earl of Leicester; immediately upon which elevation he was elected Chancellor of the University of Oxford, and was also nominated by the French King, Charles IX., a Knight of the Order of St. Michael, then accounted, after the Garter, the most distinguished order in Europe. In short, there seemed to be nothing that the crown had to give, and that he chose to ask for himself or his friends, that he might not obtain. All this time the nominal office which he held at court continued to be that of Master of the Horse, till in 1570, without resigning that, he was appointed also Lord Steward of the Household. His example in procuring this latter office was earnestly recommended by the knowing Lord Keeper Williams, in the end of the reign of James I., to the then royal favourite, Buckingham, in a letter which has been printed. "I beseech your Grace," writes Williams, "observe the Earl of Leicester, who, being the only favourite in Queen Elizabeth's time that was of any continuance, made choice of this place only, and refused the Admiralty two several times, as being an occasion either to withdraw him from the court, or to leave him there laden with ignominy; and yet, being Lord Steward, wise and in favour, he wholly commanded the Admiralty, and

made it ministerial and subordinary to his directions."*

Meanwhile to the favour of the Queen, Leicester had been laying himself out, and with great success, to add other favour and support from a very different quarter. For some years past he had been assiduously courting the Puritans, and he was now regarded as one of the leaders, or one of the chief court allies, of that rising party. To maintain this new character he cultivated at least the rhetorical part of religion with extraordinary zeal. No man was more elaborately pious in his style of expression, whether with tongue or pen. Moreover, whether to assist this scheme of policy, or to lighten his conscience, or with a view to both these ends, in the year 1570 he obtained an Act of Parliament empowering him to found an Hospital, which accordingly he did establish some years afterwards at Warwick, where it still subsists.

Yet suspicion still pursued him like his shadow,—only deepened and diffused by the lantern of sanctimonious profession which he carried in his hand. The darkest accusations continued to rise one after another against him, and to obtain, as it would appear, extensive currency and credence. The French Cardinal de Châtillon, who, having joined the Protestants, had two or three years before made his escape to England, dies suddenly at Canterbury as he is about to re-embark for the Continent; and it is immediately whispered that he has been poisoned by the procurement of the Favourite,

* *Cabala*, 281.

whom he had made his enemy by having thwarted him in some of his court intrigues. This was in 1570. In the beginning of the following year he is more distinctly charged with the murder by the like means of Sir Nicholas Throckmorton. It so happens that we have his own account of Throckmorton's death. Writing to Walsingham at Paris, on the 14th of February, he says;—"We have lost on Monday our good friend Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, who died in my house, being there taken suddenly in great extremity on Tuesday before: his lungs were perished, but a sudden cold he had taken was the cause of his speedy death. God hath his soul, and we his friends great loss of his body."* The story is, that Throckmorton on his death-bed declared his belief that he had been poisoned by a sallad he had eaten at dinner. It is said that he was believed to be about to abandon Leicester, to whose faction he had for many years attached himself, and to go over to Cecil—to whom, it is conjectured, Leicester thought he might perhaps communicate some secrets that had better remain untold.

These two cases, however, are too slightly supported by proof, either direct or circumstantial, to amount to much. They can only be taken as illustrating the sort of reputation which the Earl enjoyed. But there is a third case which is more remarkable.

Douglas Howard was the daughter of William the first Lord Howard of Effingham, and cousin-german both to Anne Boleyn and to Henry the Eighth's fifth

*Digges*, 47.

wife, Catherine Howard, the former being the daughter of her aunt, the latter of her uncle. She was, therefore, as well as Lettice Knollys, a half cousin of Queen Elizabeth. She had married John Sheffield second Lord Sheffield, a marriage from which sprung the literary Sheffield Duke of Buckingham of the time of Queen Anne. But when Lord Sheffield died in 1569, she was still so young and attractive, that people said Leicester had made away with her husband that he might have her to himself. The phrase, it seems, was that Sheffield had been carried off by a Leicester rheum or cold. The fullest account of this affair is given by Gervase Holles, the historian of the Holles family, whose uncle, Denzil Hollis, was married to Lord Sheffield's sister. Sheffield and his wife, according to this writer, whose curious narrative was drawn up about 1658, had lived together for some years in much happiness and contentment, when Lady Sheffield encountered Leicester in the course of one of Elizabeth's northern progresses. Her Majesty, upon whom the Favourite was in attendance, having taken up her abode for some days at the Earl of Rutland's at Belvoir Castle, "thither," we are told, "the principal persons of Lincolnshire repaired, to see their Queen and do their duty; and, among others, the Lord Sheffield and this fair young Lady of his, who shone as a star in the court, both in regard of her beauty and the richness of her apparel." As the story is told, one would suppose that Leicester, who, "being much taken with her perfections," forthwith plied all his arts to gain her ladyship, succeeded in completing his conquest within the few days that the royal visit

lasted. "There is small hopes," the family historian philosophises, "that she who hath once permitted a siege can hold out." But, however this may have been, "the crime," he proceeds, "being arrived at this height, their next design was how to secure it and the continuance of this their wickedness, which they thought could not well be so long as the Lord Sheffield lived. He was a gentleman of great spirit; him, therefore, they contrived how to make away. And, before they parted, Leicester, who was perfect in those villainies, undertook the charge of it." This was rapid work indeed. Not long after, while her husband's sister Holles was on a visit at Lord Sheffield's seat of Normanby, Lady Sheffield, with whom Leicester had kept up a correspondence, received a letter from him, in which he told her "that he had not been unmindful in removing that obstacle which hindered the full fruition of their contentments; that he had endeavoured one expedient already which had failed; but he would try another, which he doubted not would hit more true." "This letter," continues our author, "as she was going down the stairs to walk abroad, she dropped as she pulled her handkerchief out of her pocket, and her sister Holles, following her, took it up; and, either overcome with a woman's curiosity, or guided by an higher providence, she put it in her pocket, and read it when she found her opportunity; and, finding therein a plot against her brother's life, resolves, as it befitted her, to acquaint him with it. The lady soon after missed the letter, and, being sufficiently affrighted (conscious enough of what was in it), she strictly

examined all her women (the gentlewoman from whom I had this relation was one of them), at the first with entreaties, at the last with severity and cruelty. But out of them, who indeed knew nothing, she got nothing. Then she came to her sister Holles, and, falling down on her knees, besought her, if she had found any such letter, to deliver it unto her, that nothing of harm should come from what the contents of it might seem to threaten. But she was inexorable, and would not own a knowledge of any such accident. Shortly after the Lord Sheffield returns home, and his sister Holles, watching her opportunity, gives him the letter. He reads it with anger and amazement; that night he parts beds, the next day houses; and, retired from her, he meditates with himself in what manner he might best take an honourable and just revenge upon the adulteress. Having resolved, he posts up to London to effect it; but the discovery was arrived at the knowledge of Leicester before him; who, finding a necessity to be quick, bribes an Italian physician, (whose name I have forgot), in whom the Lord Sheffield had great confidence, to poison him; which was immediately effected after his arrival in London." *

There are some things in this relation not very easy to be believed, although Holles, in conclusion, observes that he has been the longer and more punctual in it "because it is known to few, yet a certain truth." There can be no doubt, at any rate, in regard to the connection that subsisted for some years after Sheffield's death

* *Collins, Hist. Coll.* 70.

between his widow and the Royal favourite. In May, 1573, Gilbert Talbot writes from Court to his father the Earl of Shrewsbury ;—"My Lord Leicester is very much with her Majesty, and she shows the same great good affection to him that she was wont; of late he has endeavoured to please her more than heretofore. There are two sisters now in the Court that are very far in love with him, as they have been long; my Lady Sheffield and Frances Howard: they, of like striving who shall love him better, are at great wars together, and the Queen thinketh not well of them, and not the better of him; by this means there are spies over him." * Leicester, it is pretty plain, with all his professions, continues to lead not exactly the most puritanical of lives. The younger of the two rival sisters afterwards became the second wife of Edward Earl of Hertford, eldest son of the Protector Somerset; and she lies buried in Westminster Abbey under a sumptuous monument, consecrated to her, the inscription declares, by her surviving Lord in testimony of his inviolable affection for the deceased lady, who was, for her many graces both of mind and body, not only dearly loved by her noble husband but held in high estimation and favour by her gracious sovereign Queen Elizabeth. If, as is further stated, she was in her forty-fourth year when she died in 1598, she would be only nineteen when Gilbert Talbot reports her as fighting with her sister for Leicester. Her sister might be three or four years older.

It would appear, however, that with Douglas matters

* *Lodge*, II. 17.

had already gone farther than Talbot was aware. She had borne a son to the Earl sometime in the year 1572. If we are to take her account, they had been privately married; Leicester acknowledged the son, but denied the marriage. On the 2nd of June in this same year 1572, it is worth remarking, Douglas Howard's cousin, Thomas fourth Duke of Norfolk, had been sent to the block by Elizabeth, as had his father, "Surrey of the deathless lay," by her father six-and-twenty years before. It is very strange in thus looking at a past age through the disclosures of secret history, as from the centre of a panopticon, to see how close to one another, often, transactions of the most opposite kinds are carried on; what a perplexed intermixture it all is of enjoyment and suffering, of love and hate, of life and death! Thus within thirty-six years four descendants of Thomas second Duke of Norfolk had shed their blood on the scaffold; the two Queens his grand-daughters, his grandson Surrey, and his great grand-son the fourth Duke. Of all his sons and daughters Lady Sheffield's father, Lord Howard of Effingham, alone survived; and he died, at an advanced age, on the 12th of January in the following year, 1573, taken away, it is to be hoped, before his daughter's shame had reached his ears.

Whether she had or had not secured a legal sanction to her too impatient ardours, poor Douglas was not able to retain her lover long. He took a most effectual way of putting an end to her pretensions. As she told the story upon oath, in the course of a judicial investigation of the affair, after Leicester's death, when she had for some time

resisted alike his offers and his menaces, she suddenly found her hair and nails falling or fallen off; upon which, in dread of losing her life, she consented to become the wife of Mr. (afterwards Sir) Edward Stafford. She lived to make a considerable figure on another scene, and her son by Leicester became one of the most remarkable characters of the next age, and had a very extraordinary history; but all that must be reserved for a separate narrative.

For the present let us for a little longer follow Leicester's own mysterious course, in as far as it is to be detected by the light of the few undisputed facts that glimmer through the obscurity in which it has been involved, whether by his own dark arts and hypocrisies, or by calumny and popular misconception. His desertion of Douglas Sheffield is believed to have been caused by the force of a new attraction,—our old acquaintance Lettice Lady Essex. He seems to have been partial to those half-cousins of Elizabeth, or they to have had a natural gravitation towards him. His amour with Lady Essex, who must, by-the-bye, in all probability have been at least ten years older than Lady Sheffield, may be supposed to have seriously commenced after the departure of her husband to Ireland in August, 1573, though, as we have seen, it has been surmised, or loosely assumed, by some writers that it may have had a somewhat earlier date. At first, probably, as commonly happens in such forbidden and perilous paths, neither party looked beyond the passing hour. But things went their usual course; they rapidly became more and more involved with one another; and now

scandal began to talk of Lady Sheffield and Lady Essex, with a glance at the theological pretensions of the inconstant or multifarious inamorato, as the Earl of Leicester's *Old* and *New Testaments*. This, however, was perhaps not till after the famous revels at Kenilworth, which took place in July, 1575. There can be little doubt that at this date Leicester had conceived a stronger hope than ever of marrying the Queen, and that the "princely pleasures," with which he entertained her majesty on her visit to his domain in Warwickshire, were mainly designed to forward that project. Let poetry of matchless and immortal beauty show forth what ensued, apparelling with its "mysterious veil of brightness"—at once shade and lustre, as another has finely said,—what might not fitly be exhibited without that adorning disguise:—

> That very time I saw (but thou couldst not),
> Flying between the cold Moon and the Earth,
> Cupid all armed. A certain aim he took
> At a fair Vestal throned by the West;
> And loosed a love-shaft madly from his bow,
> As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts.
> But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
> Quenched in the chaste beams of the watery Moon;
> And the imperial Votaress passed on,
> In maiden meditation, fancy-free.
> Yet marked I where the bolt of Cupid fell:
> It fell upon a little western flower,
> Before milk-white; now purple with Love's wound:
> And maidens call it *Love in Idleness.*

No reader, I will venture to say, who shall come to the persual of Mr. Halpin's most ingenious Essay—"Oberon's Vision, in the Midsummer-Night's Dream,

illustrated by a comparison with Lylie's Endymion" * —with a mind free from prepossession, and a knowledge of the time sufficiently familiar to enable him to follow the deduction with a full understanding and recollection of its several parts and of their bearing upon one another, will retain any doubt that the secret meaning of these lines has now been discovered—that Cupid is Leicester, that the Moon and the Vestal typify Elizabeth, that the Earth is the Lady Sheffield, and the little western flower the Countess of Essex. In one material point only I would dissent from Mr. Halpin's interpretation. I cannot think that the expression "now purple with Love's wound" carries any allusion to the poisoning of Lord Essex. Such a reference would be opposed to the whole tone of the passage, the spirit of which throughout is not that of denunciation and horror, but of gentleness and pity. Nor would Shakespeare, I am persuaded, have employed so inadequate an expression as "purple with Love's wound" to describe an adulteress stained with her husband's blood.

Let us, indeed, rather believe, and hold that Shakespeare too believed, that, even if Essex was really poisoned, his wife was no consenting or conniving party to the deed. It does not appear to have been charged upon her at the time; neither was her participation at all necessary. We may dismiss too as resting on no evidence, and worthy of little if any regard, the assertion or insinuation of the envenomed and unscrupulous author of *Leicester's Commonwealth*, that she made

* Printed for the Shakespeare Society, 1843.

away with a child of which she was pregnant when she heard of her husband being about to return to England in November, 1575. It is most probable, in fact, that she had not a day's or an hour's warning of that sudden visit—that she knew nothing about her husband's coming till he stood before her, if indeed, they ever met at all. According to the same authority, however, she was again with child when Essex was seized with the illness that carried him off. He was then, we are told, coming over from Ireland a second time to revenge himself upon her seducer, and he was poisoned in order to prevent this. The child, it is added, was a daughter, and was brought up by the Lady Chandos, wife of William Knollys—that is, Lady Essex's eldest surviving brother, afterwards created Earl of Banbury, who had married the widow of Edmund second Lord Chandos.

When this daughter was born is not stated, any more than what ultimately became of her. Nor are we distinctly informed when it was that the next incident in the story took place, Leicester's secretly making Lady Essex his wife. It is commonly assumed that they were married immediately after the death of Essex. But such does not seem to be Camden's meaning. He says, under the year 1576, immediately after having mentioned the death of Essex, that the suspicion of his having been poisoned was increased by Leicester's presently putting away Douglas Sheffield (whether his mistress or his wife the historian declines to decide), with money and fair promises, after she had borne him a son, and now more openly making love to Lettice, Essex's

widow, to whom afterwards he joined himself in a double matrimony; and then he subjoins:—"For, though it were reported that he had already privately married her, yet Sir Francis Knollys, father to Lettice, who was acquainted with Leicester's rambling and inconstancy in his love, would not believe it (fearing lest he should put a trick upon his daughter) unless he might see the marriage performed in his own presence, with some witnesses by, and a public notary. But these things were done a year or two after."* The impression that this account leaves is rather that the first marriage did not long precede the second. The latter is known to have been celebrated at Wanstead, on the 21st of September, 1578,† being within a day of the anniversary of the death of poor Essex two years before.

But even that second marriage was kept secret for a time. We have a Latin letter from the young Earl of Essex to Burghley, written from Cambridge six days after, in which he makes no mention of it.‡ Camden, under the year 1579, tells us how it came to light. At this time the great affair of state that occupied court, cabinet, and country, was the suit for the hand of Elizabeth, pressed with extraordinary ardour by the French prince, Francis Duke of Anjou. Three agents had been sent over one after the other by the Duke and his brother Henry the Third, to manage the negotiation, the last of whom, M. de Simier, arrived in October, 1578. Camden describes him as "a man of wit

* *Elizabeth*, 465. † *Memoirs of Sidneys*, 69. ‡ *Murdin*, 317.

and parts, and one thoroughly versed in love fancies, pleasant conceits, and other gallantries." He came, it is added, accompanied by many of the French nobility, "whom the Queen entertained at Richmond so kindly, that Leicester raged, being now quite frustrate of his long hoped-for marriage."* Yet, in point of fact, Leicester, as we have seen, was already married twice over to another woman. Camden, however, proceeds:—"In the mean while Simier ceased not amorously to woo Queen Elizabeth in Anjou's behalf. And, although she stiffly excused herself a long while, yet he brought her to that pass, that Leicester (who from his heart was against the marriage), and others, spread rumours abroad, that by love-potions and unlawful arts he had insinuated into the Queen's affection, and induced her to the love of Anjou. Simier, on the other side, left no means unessayed to remove Leicester out of his place and favour with the Queen; revealing to her his marriage with Essex's widow; whereat the Queen grew into such a passion, that she commanded Leicester not to stir out of the Castle of Greenwich, and intended to have committed him to the Tower of London, which his enemies much desired. But Sussex, though his greatest and deadliest adversary, and one that earnestly endeavoured to promote the marriage with Anjou, dissuaded her; whilst, out of a solid judgment, and the innate generosity of his noble mind, he was of opinion that no man was to be troubled for lawful marriage, which amongst all men hath ever been had in honour and

* *Elizabeth*, 461.

esteem. Yet glad he was that by this marriage he was now put beside all hope of marrying with the Queen. Nevertheless, Leicester was so incensed hereat, that he bent himself to revenge the wrong he had received. And there wanted not some who accused him as if he had suborned one Teuder, of the Queen's Guard, a bravo, to take away Simier's life. Certainly the Queen commanded by public proclamation that no man should offer any affront to Simier, his attendants, or servants, either by word or deed."* This, according to Camden, was a short time before the arrival of the Duke of Anjou in person, which we know was in September 1579.

The familiarity to which Simier was admitted by Elizabeth is well attested. "Her Majesty," Gilbert Talbot writes to his father in February 1579, "continues her very good usage of Monsieur Simier, and all his company, and he has conference with her three or four times a week, and she is the best disposed and pleasantest when she talketh with him (as by her gestures appeareth) that is possible." † Leicester too had, at first, been on very good terms with the French agent. "My Lord of Leicester," Talbot writes again in March, "is now at Wanstead, and this day Mons. Simier and his company do dine there with him." ‡ At various times he even professed, whether sincerely or not, to be in favour of the French match; though he seems more than once to have avowed a change of opinion, and there is reason to believe that he was at heart opposed to it all along, as Camden asserts. He may, perhaps,

* *Elizabeth*, 463. † *Lodge*, II. 141. ‡ *Lodge*, II. 147.

have hoped that something would happen to his new wife before very long. It appears that he was in part under her Majesty's displeasure about the time that Camden mentions. In the beginning of November, 1579, we find him writing to Burghley, it does not appear from what place, in the following strain:—"I perceive by my brother of Warwick, your lordship hath found the like bitterness in her Majesty toward me that others (too many) have acquainted me lately withal. . . . Her Majesty, I see, is grown into a very strange humour, all things considered, toward me, howsoever it were true or false as she is informed,—the state whereof I will not dispute. Albeit, I cannot confess a greater bondage in those cases than my duty of allegiance oweth. . . . As I carried myself almost more than a bondman many a year together, so long as one drop of comfort was left of any hope, as you yourself, my lord, doth well know; so, being acquitted and delivered of that hope, and by both open and private prohibitions and declarations discharged, methinks it is more than hard to take such an occasion to bear so great displeasure for. . . . I have lost both youth, liberty, and all my fortune reposed in her."* Surely these expressions can bear only one interpretation. Can the hope in which Leicester here speaks of having worn away his life, till he had been wholly acquitted, delivered, and discharged of it, be any other than the hope of marrying Elizabeth? The matter of which her Majesty had been informed, and with regard to which he will not dispute whether what

* *Wright*, II. 103—105.

she had heard be true or false, is, of course, his marriage with Lady Essex.

From that marriage, however, contracted with whatsoever object, or under whatsoever compulsion, he never made his escape. It is even said that he came to take kindly to the matrimonial yoke, and grew uxorious in his old age. But now we will leave him and the fair Lettice to themselves for a little, and attend to some of our other *dramatis personæ* who are waiting to be introduced to the reader.

## § 3.

The story of Essex's eldest daughter is as remarkable as that of her mother. Her father, it will be remembered, had expressed a wish on his death-bed that, if God should so move both their hearts, she might be married to his young friend Philip Sidney. At this time Sidney was in his twenty-second year; the Lady Penelope Devereux can hardly have been older than fourteen or fifteen. The project of the match was eagerly prosecuted upon the Earl's death by those who took an interest in his family. On the 14th of November, while the late nobleman's remains still lay uninterred, Waterhouse writes on this subject from Chartley to Sir Henry Sidney. The beginning of his letter evidently refers to imputations which had already been made against him, of having been one of those who had countenanced the notion of Essex having been poisoned. He is naturally anxious to set himself right on that

point with the father of Sidney and the brother-in-law and devoted adherent of Leicester,—a man, besides, to whom he was himself attached by a connexion of old standing, and whom he held in the highest estimation and regard. "If any reports," he says, "have come unto your lordship's ears that in the causes of my Lord of Essex I have dealt indirectly, I assure your lordship they have done me wrong; for, as I have justified him and his doings against all the world, without respect of fear or favour, so have I been free from malicious thoughts, and have quenched all sparks that might kindle any new fire in these causes, which I hope be buried in oblivion; wherein I stand to the report of Mr. Philip Sidney, above any other." Waterhouse, in truth, was too wise a man by far to give utterance to any opinion, or even perhaps to form one, on so dark a matter,—the clearing up of which, besides, would now have been as useless as it was hopeless. He goes on; —"The state of the Earl of Essex, being best known to myself, doth require my travail for a time in his causes; but my burthen cannot be great, when every man putteth to his helping hand. Her Majesty hath bestowed upon the young Earl his marriage, and all his father's rules in Wales, and promiseth the remission of his debt. The lords do generally favour and further him; some for the trust reposed, some for love to the father, other for affinity with the child, and some for other causes. And all these lords that wish well to the children, and, I suppose, all the best sort of the English lords besides, do expect what will become of the treaty between Mr. Philip and the Lady Penelope. Truly,

my lord, I must say to your lordship, as I have said to my Lord of Leicester and Mr. Philip, the breaking off from this match, if the default be on your parts, will turn to more dishonour than can be repaired with any other marriage in England. And, I protest unto your lordship, I do not think that there is at this day so strong a man in England of friends as the little Earl of Essex, nor any man more lamented than his father since the death of King Edward." *

But Waterhouse's earnest wish and Essex's dying hope was not to be granted by heaven; this marriage never took place. Sidney became, as all the world knows, the glory of his country and his age,—

> The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword,
> The expectancy and rose of the fair state,
> The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
> The observed of all observers;

Penelope Dèvereux grew up to be one of the most beautiful women of her time; and they probably loved. Of what it was that prevented their union nothing is known. Sidney has been supposed to allude to the Lady Penelope in one of his letters to his friend Languet, where, replying to Languet's exhortations to him to marry, he says, "Respecting her of whom I readily acknowledge how unworthy I am, I have written you my reasons long since, briefly indeed, but yet as well as I was able." † At this date, March 1578, Lady

* *Sidney Papers*, I. 147.

† *Correspondence of Sidney and Languet*, translated by S. A. Pears, 1845: p. 144.

Penelope may have reached the age of seventeen or eighteen. It was probably two or three years after this that she was forced, as is alleged, by her friends into a marriage with Robert Rich, third Lord Rich, who succeeded his father in that title in 1581. Then Sidney also married. His wife was Frances, the daughter of Sir Francis Walsingham. The marriage was arranged early in 1583, as we gather from a curious letter of Walsingham's, dated the 19th of March in that year, from which it further appears that the proceeding, on some account or other, excited the displeasure of Elizabeth, as indeed almost everybody's marriage seems to have done. The letter is to Sir Christopher Hatton, to whom Walsingham returns his best thanks for defending in so honourable and friendly a manner the intended match between his daughter and Mr. Sidney, while he expresses his extreme surprise that her Majesty should be offended therewith. He hopes that when she shall weigh the due circumstances of place, person, and quality, she will see that there can be no just cause for disapproval. As for the affair not having been previously communicated to her (the true reason, doubtless, being that she might not have it in her power to object to it till it had gone too far to be stopped), Walsingham gravely professes to think that it might have been deemed a presumption in a person of his condition to trouble her Majesty about a private marriage between his daughter and "a free gentleman of equal calling." He had always conceived that it would have been unfit for him

to acquaint her "with a matter of so base a subject as this poor match." In conclusion, however, he speaks out plainly and resolutely:—"I pray, you, Sir, . . . if she enter into any farther speech of the matter, let her understand that you learn generally that the match is held for concluded, and withal to let her know how just cause I shall have to find myself aggrieved if her Majesty shall show her mislike thereof. And so, committing the cause to your friendly and considerate handling, I leave you to the protection of the Almighty."* One of Anthony Bacon's correspondents writes to him in May that the marriage was expected to take place before Michaelmas.†

But Sidney's passion for Penelope Devereux was certainly not extinguished by her marriage, and it may be more than doubted if it did not survive his own. It has recorded its own history in his series of Sonnets, entitled *Astrophel and Stella,* with singular distinctness and fulness of detail.

The Sonnets are in all one hundred and eight in number; and the collection includes, besides, eleven Songs, most of them of considerable length. The celebrity of one of the parties at least would give no common interest to this romance, even if the circumstances were less strange than they are; yet it has attracted very little attention. It will therefore bear an exposition in some detail; the more, that it can be given chiefly through the medium of some little read but supremely refined and graceful poetry.

* *Wright,* II. 194. † *Birch,* I. 35.

In the second sonnet Sidney relates how his love first sprung up:—

"Not at first sight, nor with a dribbing shot,
Love gave the wound, which while I breathe will bleed;
But known worth did in tract of time proceed,
Till by degrees it had full conquest got.
I saw and liked, I liked but lov-ed not;
I loved, but did not straight what love decreed;
At length to love's decrees I, forced, agreed,
Yet with repining at so partial lot."

The seventh, eighth, and ninth are especially precious, as giving us some particulars of Stella's appearance and features. They celebrate her eyes "in colour black," her "fair skin," and her yellow hair:—

"Queen Virtue's court, which some call Stella's face;
Prepared by Nature's choicest furniture,
Hath his front built of alabaster pure;
Gold is the covering of that stately place;
The door, by which sometimes comes forth her Grace,
Red porphyr is, which lock of pearl makes sure;
Whose porches rich, which name of cheeks endure,
Marble mixed red and white do interlace."

In some following sonnets Sidney has left us some interesting memorabilia of himself, and of the effect that his passion had had upon his mind and outward demeanour. Here is the sixteenth:—

"In nature apt to like, when I did see
Beauties which were of many caracts fine,
My boiling spirits did thither soon incline,
And, Love, I thought that I was full of thee.
But, finding not those restless flames in me
Which others said did make their souls to pine,
I thought those babes of some pin's hurt did whine,
By my soul judging what love's pain might be.

But, while I, fool, thus with this lion played,
Mine eyes,—shall I say cursed or blest?—beheld
Stella. Now she is named, need more be said?
In her sight I a lesson now have spelled;
I now have learned love right, and learned even so
As who by being poisoned doth poison know."

In the eighteenth he speaks of the sharp self-reproach which he suffers, finding himself bankrupt of all the goods which heaven had lent to him, and unable even to pay the rent he owes to nature by his birth-right. His youth, he complains, doth waste, his knowledge brings forth toys. In the twenty-first he thus replies to some friend who had been endeavouring to rouse him:—

"Your words, my friend, right healthful caustics, blame
My young mind marred, whom love doth windlass so
That mine own writings, like bad servants, show
My wits quick in vain thoughts, in virtue lame;
That Plato I read for nought, but if he tame
Such coltish years; that to my birth I owe
Nobler desires, lest else that friendly foe,
Great expectation, wear a train of shame.
For since mad March great promise made of me,
If now the May of my years much decline,
What can be hoped my harvest-time will be?"

The twenty-second interrupts this course of reflection by the notice of a little incident which indicates something of Stella's character. One day when a number of ladies, "by hard promise tied," were riding under a cloudless sky in the face of a hot noon-day sun, all the rest shaded their faces with their fans: Stella alone scorned to have recourse to such protection; "yet were the hid and meaner beauties parched,"

while she, the daintiest of all, though bare went free:—

"the cause was this;
The sun, which others burned, did her but kiss."

The twenty-third sonnet is as follows:—

"The curious wits, seeing dull pensiveness
Bewray itself in my long-settled eyes,
Whence those same fumes of melancholy rise,
With idle pains and missing aim, do guess.
Some, that know how my spring I did address,
Deem that my Muse some fruit of knowledge plies;
Others, because the Prince my service tries,
Think that I think state errors to redress.
But harder judges judge ambition's rage,
Scourge of itself, still climbing slippery place,
Holds my young brain captived in golden cage.
O fools, or overwise! Alas, the race
Of all my thoughts hath neither stop nor start
But only Stella's eyes and Stella's heart."

The twenty-seventh resumes the same strain, with some more minute autobiographical touches:—

"Because I oft, in dark abstracted guise,
Seem most alone in greatest company;
With dearth of words, or answers quite awry,
To them that would make speech of speech arise;
They deem, and of their doom the rumour flies,
That poison foul of bubbling pride doth lie
So in my swelling breast, that only I
Fawn on myself, and others do despise."

The thirtieth sonnet is very important:—

"Whether the Turkish new moon minded be
To fill his horns this year on Christian coast;
How Pole's right king means, without leave of host,
To warm with ill made fit cold Muscovy;

If French can yet three parts in one agree ;
What now the Dutch in their full diets boast ;
How Holland hearts, now so good towns be lost,
Trust in the shade of pleasing Orange tree ;
How Ulster likes of that same golden bit
Wherewith my father once made it half tame ;
If in the Scotch court be not weltering yet ;
These questions busy wits to me do frame :
I, cumbered with good manners, answer do,
But know not how, for still I think of you."

If these historical notices could be all satisfactorily explained, the exact time at which the sonnet was composed would be discovered. It may be suspected that the text is not quite sound in one or two places; still the general meaning is everywhere plain enough. Unfortunately, nearly all the circumstances mentioned are somewhat indefinite. War about to be made by the Turks upon their Christian neighbours—an invasion of Russia projected by Poland—the continuance of civil dissension in France—the entertainment of great designs by the Germanic Diet—none of these events were confined to any particular year. The next fact, however, that of the people of Holland, upon the loss of certain important towns, putting their trust in "the shade of pleasing Orange tree," must apparently mean their acknowledgment of the young Maurice Prince of Orange as their Stadtholder, after the assassination of his father and the surrender of Antwerp, in the summer of 1585. At this date also the Lord Deputy, Sir John Perrot, had recently put down a formidable insurrection in the West and North of Ireland, having some time before, as Camden tells us, to establish a permanent check upon the turbulent natives, "imposed upon the

great Lords of Ulster a certain number of soldiers to be trained up and exercised in war." The same expedient had probably been resorted to some years before by Sir Henry Sidney, and might, in allusion to the charge which it entailed upon the Ulster Lords, be called a "golden bit." This would make the Sonnets to have been probably written little more than a twelvemonth before Sidney's death. *

Perhaps some dim guess at the causes or course of events which had divided the two lovers may be formed from another of the sonnets, the thirty-third. Do not the following lines seem to imply that Sidney had only himself to blame for the loss of the lady; that he had allowed her to become another's by declining to come forward himself as a suitor for her hand—perhaps when her heart was already his—either from distrusting his chance of success, or, as he rather seems to intimate, partly out of some fantastic scruple or punctilio; partly from being not yet sufficiently in love with her?

> "I might, unhappy word! O me, I might,
> And then would not or could not see my bliss;
> Till now, wrapt in a most infernal night,
> I find how heavenly day, wretch, I did miss.

* In the thirty-eighth sonnet Sidney introduces himself as addressed by the title of *Sir* Philip. The sonnet, then, must have been written after he was knighted. The common statement is, that he was knighted in January 1583; but it is remarkable that Walsingham in his letter to Hatton quoted above, which is dated the 19th of March in that year, calls him *Mr.* Sidney. If it was really in January 1584 that he was knighted, the Sonnets *must* have been written after his marriage; and, even taking the common date of his knighthood, they cannot possibly have been written more than a few months before his marriage, and *may* have been written after it.

Heart, rent thyself; thou dost thyself but right:
No lovely Paris made thy Helen his;
No force, no fraud, robbed thee of thy delight;
Nor Fortune of thy fortune author is;
But to myself myself did give the blow,
While too much wit, forsooth, so troubled me,
That I respects for both our sakes must show;
And yet could not by rising morn foresee
How fair a day was near. O punished eyes!
That I had been more foolish or more wise!"

It is plain enough from this, at any rate, that in some way or other she was now lost to him. The thirty-seventh sonnet goes still further, distinctly telling us who the lady was:—

"My mouth doth water, and my breast doth swell,
My tongue doth itch, my thoughts in labour be:
Listen, then, lordings, with good ear to me;
For of my life I must a riddle tell.
Toward Aurora's court a nymph doth dwell
Rich in all beauties which man's eye can see;
Beauties so far from reach of words that we
Abase her praise saying she doth excel:
Rich in the treasure of deserved renown,
Rich in the riches of a royal heart,
Rich in those gifts which give the eternal crown;
Who, though most rich in these and every part
Which makes the patents of true worldly bliss,
Hath no misfortune but that RICH she is."

For some time longer he still complains of her obduracy. In the forty-fourth sonnet:—

"Her heart, sweet heart, is of no tiger's kind;
And yet she hears and yet no pity I find,
But, more I cry, less grace she doth impart."

In the forty-fifth:—

"Stella oft sees the very face of woe
Painted in my beclouded stormy face;
But cannot skill to pity my disgrace,
Not though thereof the cause herself she know.

Yet, hearing late a fable which did show
Of lovers never known a grievous case,
Pity therefore got in her breast such place
That from her eyes a spring of tears did flow."

When we arrive at the fifty-seventh, however, we find a change beginning to show itself:—

"She heard my plaints, and did not only hear,
But them, so sweet as she,* most sweetly sing,
With that fair breast making woe's darkness clear."

So again, in the fifty-ninth, she is spoken of as often singing his songs, although still reserving only for her lap-dog all such favours as might be construed into undoubted proofs of affection:—

"Yet, while I languish, him that bosom clips,
That lap doth lap, nay lets, in spite of spite,
This sour-breath'd mate taste of those sugared lips."

In the sixtieth she is, for the first time, described as relenting to a certain extent:—

"But when the ruggedest step of fortune's race
Makes me fall from her sight, then sweetly she
With words, wherein the Muses' treasures be,
Shows love and pity to my absent case."

In the sixty-second she has allowed herself to go a little further:—

"Late tired with woe, even ready for to pine
With rage of love, I called my love unkind;
She, in whose eyes love, though unfelt, doth shine,
Sweet said that I true love in her should find.
I joyed, but straight thus watered was my wine;—
That love she did, but with a love not blind,
Which would not let me, whom she loved, decline
From nobler course fit for my birth and mind."

* Some corruption of the text may be suspected here.

She therefore desired him to fly from those tempests of passionate and unhallowed affection, and anchor himself fast on virtue's shore. She has now, however, been drawn into that close combat in which it is scarcely given to engage and not to fall; and in the next sonnet we find her reduced to the last desperate resource, of a denial in vehement words, which her emboldened assailant does not scruple to wrest to the very opposite meaning. In the sixty-sixth he assumes, though as yet somewhat timidly or doubtfully, the language of hope:—

"I cannot brag of word, much less of deed;
Fortune's wheels still with me in one sort flow;
My wealth no more, and no whit less my need;
Desire still on the stilts of fear doth go.
And yet, amid all fears, a hope there is
Stolen to my heart since, last fair night, my day,
Stella's eyes sent to me the beams of bliss,
Looking on me while I looked other way.
But, when mine eyes back to their heaven did move,
They fled with blush, which guilty seemed of love."

The two succeeding sonnets record her continued efforts, "with voice more fit to wed Amphion's lyre," to persuade him to conquer his passion, but also the continued contradiction between her words and the language of her eyes. At last in the sixty-ninth he breaks out:—

"O joy too high for my low style to show!
O bliss fit for a nobler state than me!
Envy, put out thine eyes, lest thou do see
What oceans of delight in me do flow.
My friend, that oft saw'st through all masks my woe,
Come, come, and let me pour myself on thee!
Gone is the winter of my misery;
My spring appears; O see what here doth grow!

For Stella hath, with words where faith doth shine,
Of her high heart given me the monarchy:
I, I, oh I, may say that she is mine.
And, though she give but thus conditionly
This realm of bliss while virtuous course I take,
No kings be crowned but they some covenants make."

A kiss stolen from her while she slept, for which he is chid and threatened, is soon followed by others freely granted. Then, after the eighty-fifth sonnet, comes the fourth song, one of the nine stanzas of which may be given for the sake of the mention it makes of the lady's mother:—

"Your fair mother is abed,
Candles out and curtains spread.
She thinks you do letters write:
Write, but let me first indite.
Take me to thee, and thee to me.
No, no, no, no, my dear, let be."

Are we then to understand that Lady Rich was at this time living, not with her husband, but with the Countess of Leicester? The two ladies, at any rate, were residing in the same house.

The fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth songs are all introduced together after the eighty-seventh sonnet. Part of the eighth must be quoted, as containing the crisis of the story. The simple and passionate writing, also, is worthy of all admiration:—

"In a grove most rich of shade,
Where birds wanton music made;
May then young his pied weeds showing,
New perfumed with flowers fresh growing;

"Astrophel with Stella sweet
Did for mutual comfort meet,
Both within themselves oppressed,
But each in the other blest.

"Him great harms had taught much care,
Her fair neck a foul yoke bare;
But her sight his cares did banish,
In his sight her yoke did vanish.

"Wept they had, alas the while,
But now tears themselves did smile
While their eyes, by love directed,
Interchangeably reflected.

* * * * *

"Then she spake: her speech was such
As, not ears, but heart did touch;
While such wise she love denied
As yet love she signified.

"Astrophel, said she, my love
Cease in these effects to prove.
Now be still; yet still believe me
Thy grief more than death would grieve me

"If that any thought in me
Can taste comfort but of thee,
Let me feed, with hellish anguish,
Joyless, hopeless, endless languish.

"If those eyes you prais-ed be
Half so dear as you to me,
Let me home return stark-blinded
Of those eyes, and blinder-minded.

"If to secret of my heart
I do any wish impart
Where thou art not foremost placed,
Be both wish and I defaced.

"If more may be said, I say,
All my bliss in thee I lay;
If thou love, my love content thee,
For all love, all faith is meant thee.

* * * * *

"Therefore, dear, this no more move,
Lest, though I leave not thy love,
Which too deep in me is framed,
I should blush when thou art named.

"Therewithal away she went,
Leaving him to passion rent
With what she had done and spoken,
That therewith my song is broken."

Thus, conqueror of herself, was Penelope Devereux saved for this time, in circumstances of extremest peril, in which many another would have been lost. Let not this be forgotten in the judgment passed upon her after her whole story has been told. Sidney and she seem to have met no more, or at most to have seen each other only once or twice again for a few hurried moments. In the eighty-seventh sonnet he speaks of having been forced away from her by some call of duty; and their separation lasts till we come to the hundred-and-third, which commemorates his beholding her from a window as she was borne in a boat upon the Thames :—

"The boat for joy could not to dance forbear
While wanton winds, with beauties so divine
Ravished, stayed not till in her golden hair
They did themselves, oh sweetest prison, twine."

The eleventh song is in the form of a dialogue supposed to be held between them one night when he has presented himself underneath her window; but it is probably a fancy sketch.

Not a word of all this is to be found in any of Sidney's biographers. All that we know beyond what he has himself told us is, that in the latter part of the year 1585, as if impelled by some uncontrollable restlessness, he had secretly arranged with Sir Francis Drake to accompany him on an expedition to America, when the design was discovered by the Queen, and he was stopped

by her express command as he was on his way to the place of embarkation; and that almost immediately afterwards, or in the beginning of November, he was appointed to the government of Flushing, upon which he forthwith set sail for the Netherlands, whence he was never to return. He was mortally wounded under the walls of Zutphen on the 22nd of September, 1586, and expired at Arnheim, on Monday the 17th of October following.

In his will, dated the 30th of September, Sidney leaves his "most dear and loving wife, Dame Frances Sidney," his sole executrix. She had followed him to the Netherlands in the end of June or beginning of July, and she was with him when he died. Leicester writes to Walsingham from Utrecht on the 25th of October:— "Your sorrowful daughter and mine is here with me at Utrecht till she may recover some strength; for she is wonderfully overthrown through her long care since the beginning of her husband's hurt, and I am the more careful that she should be in some strength or she take her journey into England, for that she is with child, which I pray God send to be a son, if it be his will. But, whether son or daughter, they shall be my children too. She is most earnest to be gone out of this country; and so I could wish her, seeing it is against her mind, but for her weakness yet, her case considered." * She had already borne Sidney a daughter, and she is supposed to have suffered a miscarriage of the child with which she was pregnant at the time of his

* *Leicester Correspondence*, 446.

death. It appears that she had so serious an illness in the latter part of December following, that her life was thought to be in danger.*

Lady Sidney remained a widow for about four years. Then, in the latter part of the year 1590, she married the Earl of Essex, who would then be in his twenty-third year. She and Lady Rich, therefore, were now sisters. The marriage was at first kept secret, or at least was privately performed, from some apprehension of the resentment of her Majesty. It had the countenance, however, of the nearest connexions of the lady's late husband. Sir Thomas Wilkes writes from Windsor on the 16th of October to Sir Robert Sidney, Sir Philip's brother and heir:—"Whereas you have been informed that you shall stand, in some sort, in her Majesty's indignation in respect of your privity to the marriage of my Lord of Essex, I dare assure your Lordship, upon my poor credit, there is no such matter; for, besides the good and gracious speeches used to me by her Majesty of your Lordship at the time I signified the same unto you, she hath sithence upon other conferences to me expressed the like. And, because I would not altogether trust mine own sense and conceit therein, I have sithence the receipt of your letter, in as discreet manner as I could, inquired among such as could well inform me, and cannot find there hath been any such matter at all. So as, without all doubt, the parties that have given you notice of this matter have misconceived or misunderstood the same."† Elizabeth,

* *Leicester Correspondence*, 480, 481. † *Sidney Papers*, I. 312.

to do her justice, never kept up her anger long upon these occasions; when the mischief was done, she had too much good sense, as well as too much pride, to continue a useless and undignified quarrel with what was past prevention and remedy. The present marriage accordingly was now openly acknowledged. "The Lady of Essex," writes Thomas Kerry, Clerk of the Privy Seal, to the Lord Talbot, from London, on the 23rd of October, "came this last week to Walsingham House, waited upon like the Countess of Essex."*

Sir Francis Walsingham, the new-made Countess's father, had died in April of this year; and his daughter, who was his only child, was now probably the owner of Walsingham House, which stood in Seething Lane, not very far from the present Blackwall Railway Station. Everybody has heard of his having died so poor that they were obliged to bury him in the night to prevent his body being seized by his creditors. This was hard in the case of Walsingham, who had shown great solicitude a few years before that his distinguished son-in-law should have a suitable funeral, and had impoverished himself to pay Sidney's debts. "Sir Philip," he writes to Leicester in November 1586, "hath left a great number of poor creditors. . . . . I have paid, and must pay, for him above £6000, which I do assure your Lordship hath brought me into a most hard and desperate state, which I weigh nothing in respect of the loss of the gentleman, who was my chief worldly comfort." † And again, on the day following:—

* *Lodge*, II. 417. † *Leicester Correspondence*, 454.

"I have caused Sir Philip Sidney's will to be considered of by certain learned in the laws, and I find the same imperfect touching the sale of his land for the satisfying of his poor creditors, which I do assure your Lordship doth greatly afflict me, [that] a gentleman that hath lived [in] so unspotted reputation, and had so great care to see all men satisfied, should be so [exposed] to the outcry of his creditors. His goods will not suffice to answer a third part of his debts already known. This hard estate of this noble gentleman maketh me stay to take order for his funeral until your Lordship's return. I do not see how the same can be performed with that solemnity that appertaineth without the utter undoing of his creditors, which is to be weighed [in] conscience. Sorry I am to trouble your Lordship with these unpleasant matters, but that a necessity moveth me thereto."* Sidney had come into possession of the family estate of Penshurst only a few months before his death, by the decease of his father in May 1586, which was followed by that of his mother in August. He had after all a splendid funeral at St. Paul's, in February 1587, the expense of which was probably defrayed either by Leicester or by the Queen.

Within a few months after his widow became the wife of Essex, and the sister-in-law of Lady Rich, Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella* was printed. The title-page bears the date of 1591. Strange as it may be thought, it would seem that Lady Essex at least felt no annoyance at this publication. A few years after, namely, in 1595,

* *Leicester Correspondence*, 457.

appeared a new volume of poetry by Edmund Spenser, containing his "Colin Clout 's come Home Again," in which Sidney is introduced as Astrophel, and Lady Rich as Stella:—

> "Ne less praiseworthy Stella do I read,
> Though nought my praises of her needed are,
> Whom verse of noblest shepherd, lately dead,
> Hath praised and raised above each other star."

But not only so. In the same volume was another poem, entitled "Astrophel; a Pastoral Elegy upon the Death of the most noble and valourous Knight, Sir Philip Sidney," which is nothing else than an elaborate celebration of the loves of Sidney and Stella, Sidney's wife never being mentioned, nor the slightest allusion made to her existence, from the beginning to the end of it—except, indeed, that it is inscribed "to the most beautiful and virtuous Lady, the Countess of Essex!" The poem extends to above three hundred lines. Astrophel is described as "a gentle shepherd, born in Arcady," whose love, we are told, was sought by "many a nymph, both of the wood and brook." But he cared for one alone:—

> "Stella the fair! the fairest star in sky,
> As fair as Venus, or the fairest fair:
> A fairer star saw never living eye
> Shoot her sharp-pointed beams through purest air:
> Her he did love, her he alone did honour;
> His thoughts, his rhymes, his songs were all upon her.
>
> "To her he vowed the service of his days,
> On her he spent the riches of his wit,
> For her he made hymns of immortal praise,
> Of only her he sung, he thought, he writ."

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At last, while hunting in "a forest wide and waste," a wild beast turns upon and gores him. The shepherds by whom he is found bear him at his own desire "unto his loved lass." At the sight of his face, once so fair, all riven and gory,

"Her yellow locks, that shone so bright and long,
As sunny beams in fairest summer's day,
She fiercely tore, and with outrageous wrong
From her red cheeks the roses rent away.

* * * * *

"His pallid face, impictur-ed with death,
She bath-ed oft with tears, and dri-ed oft;
And with sweet kisses sucked the wasting breath
Out of his lips, like lillies, pale and soft."

But all her fond affection cannot detain his parting spirit. He dies in the midst of her caresses :—

"Which when she saw she stay-ed not a whit,
But after him did make untimely haste:
Forthwith her ghost out of her corpse did flit,
And follow-ed her mate, like turtle chaste;
To prove that death their hearts cannot divide,
Which living were in love so firmly tied.

"The gods, which all things see, this same beheld,
And, pitying this pair of lovers true,
Transform-ed them there lying on the field
Into one flower, that is both red and blue;
It first grows red, and then to blue doth fade,
Like Astrophel, which thereinto was made.

"And in the midst thereof a star appears,
As fairly formed as any star in skies,
Resembling Stella in her freshest years,
Forth darting beams of beauty from her eyes;
And all the day it standeth full of dew,
Which is the tears that from her eyes did flow.

"That herb of some Starlight is called by name,
Of others Penthia, though not so well;
But thou, wherever thou dost find the same,
From this day forth do call it Astrophel;
And, whensoever thou it up dost take,
Do pluck it softly, for that shepherd's sake." *

Then follows a long lament by the sister of Astrophel,

—— "that Clarinda hight,
The gentlest shepherdess that lives this day,
And most resembling, both in shape and sprite,
Her brother dear;"—

that is, Mary, Countess of Pembroke. Two stanzas of her doleful lay are eminently beautiful. Having exclaimed, "Aye me! can so divine a thing be dead!" she goes on:—

"Ah! no: it is not dead, nor can it die,
But lives for aye in blissful Paradise,
Where, like a new-born babe, it soft doth lie
In bed of lillies, wrapt in tender wise,
And compassed all about with roses sweet,
And dainty violets, from head to feet.

"There thousand birds, all of celestial brood,
To him do sweetly carol day and night,
And with strange notes, of him well understood,
Lull him asleep in angel-like delight;
Whilst in sweet dream to him presented be
Immortal beauties, which no eye may see."

* In a letter to Sir Egerton Brydges, dated 10 October, 1830, which Sir Egerton has published in his *Autobiography*, II. 282, Southey says:—"Sidney's *Stella* cannot have been Lady Rich, because his poems plainly relate to a successful passion, and because the name was applied to his widow." There can be no doubt, at any rate, that in Spenser *Stella* is uniformly the lady celebrated by Sidney in the Sonnets, on whom "he spent the riches of his wit," for whom "he made hymns of immortal praise," &c. And the Sonnets clearly do not relate to a suit which either ended in marriage or ever had marriage in view. I do not understand

To this elegy by Spenser himself, moreover, were appended others by other writers, in the first of which entitled "The Mourning Muse of Thestylis," supposed to be the production of Ludowick Bryskett, Sidney is celebrated by his real name, and Stella is brought in bewailing his loss, and her own cruel fortune, in being now left to endure her troubles and miseries alone, in a very vehement declamation. She is not made, however, to finish by undergoing either death or metamorphosis. Another of the poems is supposed to be from the pen of Sidney's sister, the Countess of Pembroke; and the collection may therefore be presumed to have been made by Spenser with her consent, if not by her direction.

Here, then, is a state of things somewhat perplexing to modern notions. A recently deceased gentleman, most probably married at the time, has passionately loved and been beloved by a lady who then was and still is another man's wife; and the published celebration of him and her, in strains of the most enthusiastic admiration, on that account is respectfully dedicated to his widow! It is a style of social morality that is now quite gone out. The age, moreover, was eminently a religious one, — one not of religious profession only, but, beyond all dispute, also of religious belief. The principal parties to the present transaction were all distinguished as religious characters. Sidney had died a most pious and edifying death. Lady Rich,

how their relating to "a successful passion" (which can here mean only a passion that was returned by the lady), should prove that *Stella* is not Lady Rich.

as we have seen, is lauded as, among her other gifts and graces, "rich in those gifts which give the eternal crown." Sidney's sister, Lady Pembroke, had in conjunction with her brother composed a metrical version of the Psalms. Spenser was a most religious poet; a singular spirit of what may be denominated Platonic Puritanism runs through all his poetry. Lady Essex was probably not behind her neighbours in this respect.

It was a strange, self-contradictory time, difficult to be understood or imagined in our day, when the violent agencies then in operation have long spent their force, and all things have subsided into comparative consistency and decorum. Religion was a mighty power, was indeed universally confessed, and in general undoubtingly believed, to be the thing that was entitled to carry it over all other things. Men, almost without exception, looked upon the truths of religion much in the light in which we now look upon the laws of nature, as evident necessities, escape from which was wholly out of the question. A person would have been held a fool or a lunatic who had appeared to think otherwise. This explains not merely the universal profession of religion, by persons of whatever character or manner of life, but the generally manifest sincerity of the profession. The blight of unbelief had scarcely yet touched men's minds. The common faith, Protestant or Catholic, was as much the sustenance of all alike as the common air. It was in this respect almost as in the palmy days of ancient Paganism, as in Greece in the time of Homer, or indeed for ages afterwards, when he who did not discern and acknowledge a present

deity in any one of certain common natural occurrences would have been deemed not to see or hear aright, not to have the proper use of his senses.

If this had been all, one might envy a time when the earth, thus gorgeously illumined by imagination, and hung with splendours not its own, might be thought to lie so near to the gate, so close under the crystal battlements, of heaven; and when men, unsubdued by sense, walked so much in the light of the spiritual and invisible, and were exalted and upheld by so much that has now for ever passed away. But the actual effect was considerably different from what a lively fancy might picture it. It would almost seem as if religion had lost, instead of gained, in practical power and efficacy by being thus universally received and submitted to as a matter of course. In accepting its doctrines with the same dead acquiescence, as we may call it, with which the mind surrenders itself to the propositions of the mathematics, or to any simple physical truth, the less scrupulous spirits of the first age of the Reformation seem many of them hardly to have connected more of sentiment or affection with their religious belief than with their belief in the law of nature according to which a stone dropt from the hand falls to the ground. They even appear to have considered themselves entitled to treat the religious truth and the physical truth on many occasions in the same way; and, as they could arrest the action of the law of gravitation at any time by the application of some opposing force, in like manner by some analogous contrivance to suspend and neutralise any

principle or precept of religion whenever they chose. The principle, indeed, was not to be overturned, or for a moment gainsaid or questioned; but still it was to be kept under management and control, just as if it were a principle of mechanics or chemistry. The fierce and all-absorbing contest between the two rival forms of Christianity had hushed all disputation, had stopped all doubt, all reflection, all investigation about Christianity itself; had made that on all hands be simply taken for granted;—and this was the result.

There was also the removal of some guarding and restraining sanctions provided by the old religion, while its spirit of indulgence, which made them necessary, and which was by them to a certain extent made less dangerous, was, we may be sure, by no means yet forgotten by many who had left the ancient church. A Protestant, who remained a Romanist at heart in this respect, would not resist a strong temptation the better for having got rid of the confessional and the formalities of penitence.

Above all, there was the mixed and imperfect character of the yet recent civilisation, only showing its green summits here and there from amid the waste. It was a wild confusion of civilisation and barbarism. A century of convulsion and violent change, first a sanguinary and desolating civil war, then a more bitter religious strife, although it may have given an impulse to the social progress of the country at some points, could not but have retarded or paralysed it at others. Nor could a generation which had sprung out of such a time grow up without retaining much of its half-savage

spirit. Even the external and material civilisation of this age was the most startling display of incongruities and incompletenesses,—the most curious patchwork of cloth of gold and frieze. And that was but a type or emblem of its mental and moral civilisation, which in like manner everywhere betrays its volcanic origin by such intermixtures and combinations as seem to us in the present day all but incredible, unintelligible, and impossible.

§ 4.

But now our story must return once more to him who plays the most conspicuous part in it in the line of religious profession. Leicester had soon re-emerged from the eclipse brought upon him by the detection of his marriage in the end of 1579. After a few months we find him again as high in the royal regard and confidence as ever. Nor did he lose his old popular reputation. When his great rival and enemy Thomas Radcliffe, Earl of Sussex, died in the beginning of June 1583, the favourite had the credit of having sent him to the other world by the same means which he was believed to have employed with Essex, and Châtillon, and Throckmorton. It was said that Sussex himself had on his death-bed declared his conviction that poison had been given him by Leicester's contrivance. Naunton reports him to have cautioned his friends, when taking his last farewell of them, to "beware of the Gypsey" (meaning Leicester); "for," he added, "he will be too hard for you all; you know not the

beast so well as I do." Camden also expressly states that, when in September 1586, after the discovery of Babington's conspiracy, the ministers were deliberating, in considerable perplexity, what course should be taken with the Queen of Scots, Leicester, who was then in the Netherlands, wrote over advising that she should be quietly taken off by poison, and sent a divine privately to Walsingham to satisfy him that no wrong would be done in so dealing with her. But in this he went no farther than Elizabeth herself went along with him.

An Italian physician, Dr. Julio Borgarucci, had been long pointed at as Leicester's principal agent in the work of secret assassination. He seems to have resided in the Earl's house. Dr. Julio, as he is commonly called, enjoyed, notwithstanding, an eminent professional reputation, and was in the highest practice. He is farther connected with Leicester's biography by having, it is said, been the occasion of his Lordship breaking with his old friend Grindal, the puritanical Archbishop of Canterbury. Dr. Julio, it seems, having left or turned off his wife, had gone and married another woman, trusting that Leicester's powerful protection would save him harmless, perhaps the more confidently that his said protector was himself generally believed to have done the same thing. Grindal, however, was neither to be persuaded nor frightened into winking at such a scandal. Even a request from her Majesty that he would stay the proceedings commenced against the learned bigamist was of no avail. This affair is asserted both by Sir John Harrington and by

Camden to have been the true origin of the troubles in which Grindal was involved in the last days of his primacy; although the circumstance of which advantage was taken to keep alive and inflame the royal resentment, and which was made the pretext of the measures taken against him, was his indulgence or connivance in regard to the Puritans.* Leicester, forgetting his own Puritanism for the moment, appears to have joined in the persecution of the Archbishop on this charge. He resumed his former politics, however, upon Grindal's death (which happened just in time to save him from deprivation), and the promotion to the primacy of the anti-puritanical Whitgift, in 1583. But a few years after this both he and Walsingham are affirmed to have finally abandoned the Puritans;—"they did absolutely renounce any further intercession for them, professing that they had been horribly abused with their hypocrisy," are the words of High Church Heylin, whose authority may perhaps be accepted as good for the main fact which he states, if not for more.

Meanwhile, Leicester had entered upon a new career, having in October, 1585, been appointed by Elizabeth Captain General of the forces which she was at last prevailed upon to send to the assistance of the United Provinces. He showed no deficiency either of personal courage or of general talent; but he gained little credit as a military commander. His appointment as Governor and Captain-General of the States of the United Provinces, and the indignation of Elizabeth on his

* *Camden, Elizabeth*, 494.—*Harrington, Brief View of Church of England.*

acceptance of this office, are recounted in all the histories. He returned to England in disgust, immediately after the death of Sidney, in November 1586. Her Majesty's anger, however, as usual, soon subsided. Having in the interim received a grant of the valuable office of one of the Justices in Eyre, he was in June 1587 sent back to the Netherlands in command of a new army. But in November of the same year, before he had done anything, he was finally recalled from that scene, and another Captain-General substituted. It would almost seem as if Elizabeth could not patiently bear his absence. In the following year, when an army was raised in contemplation of the Spanish invasion, Leicester was appointed by her to the chief command, with the title of Her Majesty's Lieutenant-General. "My Lieutenant-General," she said, in her famous speech at Tilbury, "shall be in my stead, than whom never prince commanded a more noble or worthy subject." So infatuated was she that, soon after this, at his own request, she agreed to create him her Lieutenant-General for England and Ireland, thus in fact putting the entire government of the kingdom into his hands; but here, according to Camden, Burleigh and the Lord Chancellor Hatton interfered with the strongest representations against such an appointment at such a crisis, and the letters-patent, which had been already drawn out, were stopped. On this Leicester left the court for Kenilworth: but stopping on the journey at a house which he had at Cornbury, in Oxfordshire, he died there after a short illness, on the 4th of September,—within seven or eight miles of where Amy Robsart had

met her death almost that very day eight-and-twenty years before. If the commonly received date of his birth may be relied upon, he had just doubled his years since then.

What if the wife of his youth was avenged by the hand of the wife of his age? It has been averred that so it was.

Of Lettice Knollys during the life of her second husband we hear very little. Possibly she may not have appeared much at court; but it is quite an untenable notion that has been taken up by Mr. Halpin, that, perhaps, her marriage with Leicester was kept to the last a secret from the Queen. There can be no doubt that she was very soon known as the Countess of Leicester to all the world. She bore the Earl a son, who died, when little more than three years old, in July 1584, at Wanstead, and lies buried in the Collegiate Church of Warwick, where the inscription on an altar monument near to that of his father declares that "Here resteth the body of the noble imp, Robert Dudley, Baron of Denbigh, . . . a child of great parentage, but of greater hope and towardness, taken from this transitory unto the everlasting life, . . . and in this place laid up among his noble ancestors, in assured hope of the general resurrection." When Leicester went over to the Netherlands in November 1585, he left his wife in England; nor does she appear to have ever joined him while he continued abroad. But on the 11th of February 1586, his relation Thomas Dudley writes to the Earl from Leicester House:—"It was told her Majesty that my Lady was prepared presently to come over to your

Excellency, with such a train of ladies and gentlewomen, and such rich coaches, litters, and side-saddles, as her Majesty had none such, and that there should be such a court of ladies as should far pass her Majesty's court here. This information, though most false, did not a little stir her Majesty to extreme choler and dislike of all your doings there, saying, with great oaths, she would have no more courts under her obeisance but her own, and would revoke you from thence with all speed. This Mr. Vice-Chamberlain first told me in great secret, and afterwards Mr. Secretary, and last of all my Lord Treasurer. Unto them all I answered, that the information was most false in every degree, and that there was no such preparation made by my Lady, nor any intention in her to go over, neither had your Lordship any intention to send for her, so far as I knew. This being told her Majesty by my Lord Treasurer, and Mr. Vice-Chamberlain also, though not both at one time, did greatly pacify her stomach."* And on the last day of the same month Secretary Davison adds on the same subject:—"I have not seen my Lady these ten or twelve days; to-morrow I hope, God willing, to do my duty towards her. I found her greatly troubled with tempestuous news she received from court, but somewhat comforted when she understood how I had proceeded with her Majesty. It hath been assured unto me by some great ones, that it was put into her Majesty's head that your Lordship had sent for her, and that she made her preparation for the journey,

* *Leicester Correspondence*, 112.

which, added to a number of other things cast in by such as affect neither your Lordship nor the cause, did not a little increase the heat of her Majesty's offence against you."* In all this there may possibly have been something of the woman as well as of the queen; her Majesty, at any rate, was evidently determined that, if she was not to have Leicester to herself, no other woman, or women, should have more of his society than what could not well be kept from them.

His wife, nevertheless, had acquired a great ascendancy over him. This abundantly appears from his last Will and Testament, which is in all respects a highly curious document, and throws the richest illustration both upon the character and the circumstances of the man. It is of considerable length, but a pretty full abstract of it is indispensable.

It is dated at Middleburg, in Zealand, on different days in July, August, and September, 1587, or about a year before the Earl's death; and the original, which is preserved in the Register of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, is all in his own handwriting. He sets out in a high strain of pious profession. "First," he says, "I take it to be the part of every true Christian to make a true testimony of his faith at all times, and especially in such a case and such a time as this is." And then he goes on, in a very flowing style, to declare his belief in all the common doctrines, especially confessing that, above all else that God has done for mankind, "is the gift of his blessed Son, Jesus Christ, to

* *Leicester Correspondence*, 144.

be the Redeemer and Saviour of his people that be faithful;" "by whose only merits and passion," he adds, "I verily believe and am most assured of the forgiveness of all my sins, be they never so great or infinite, and that he only is the sufficient sacrifice that hath appeased the wrath of his Father, and that blessed Lamb which innocently suffered all torments, to bear the bitter burthen due to us miserable wretches, for his most tender compassion over all that have grace to believe in him. All which his grace's goodness and mercy I most faithfully take hold on, being so promised by Himself, who is the only truth itself, that I am the child of salvation, and to be the inheritor of his everlasting kingdom, and to meet with him at the joyful day of resurrection, with all the faithful children and saints of God." This sounds sincere, and it would be rash to conclude that it may not have been all as earnestly felt as it is expressed, at least for the time being.

After this preface he proceeds to his worldly concerns, being, he says, in perfect health and memory, though having had very little leisure since his arrival in the Netherlands to give any attention to his private affairs. He had always wished, as his dear wife knows, and some of his friends, that he should be buried at Warwick among his ancestors; but he leaves the matter to be settled by her Majesty; "for, as it was when it had life a most faithful, true, loving servant unto her, so living and so dead let the body be at her gracious determination, if it shall so please her." As for his bequests, they cannot be great by reason that his ability is little; "for I have not," he says, "dissembled with the world

my estate, but have lived always above any living I had, for which I am heartily sorry, lest that, through my many debts from time to time, some men have taken loss by me." He appoints his "most dear well-beloved wife, the Countess of Leicester," to be his sole executrix; requiring her, for all the love between them, to be content to take the office upon her. First, above all persons, he remembers, as it is his duty, his "most dear and most gracious Sovereign," whose creature, under God, he had been, and who had been a most bountiful and most princely mistress to him, as well in advancing him to many honours as in maintaining him many ways by her goodness and liberality. He prays that it may please the Almighty God to make her not only the oldest princess that ever he gave to rule over England, but the godliest, the virtuousest, and the worthiest in his sight, that ever he gave to any nation; and that she may be indeed a blessed mother and nurse both to the people and to the Church of England. "The token," he adds, "I do bequeath unto her Majesty is the jewel with three great emrodes, with a fair large table diamond in the midst, without a foil and set about with many diamonds without foil, and a rope of fair white pearl, to the number six hundred, to hang the said jewel at; which pearl and jewel was once purposed for her Majesty against a coming to Wanstead, but it must now thus be disposed, which I do pray you, my dear wife, see performed."

"Next her Majesty," the Will then proceeds, "I will now return to my dear wife, and set down that for her which cannot be so well as I would wish it, but shall

be as well as I am able to make it, having always found her a faithful, loving, and a very obedient, careful wife, and so do I trust this Will of mine shall find her no less mindful of me being gone than I was always of her being alive." He leaves her, over and above her jointure, the lease of Drayton Basset, freely to give and dispose at her will; also, for ever, the manor of Wanstead, already assured to her, together with certain parcels of grounds which he had purchased, to be added to the park there, from the Earl of Oxford and Lord Buckhurst; also, during her life, all other lands and tenements which he had purchased in the said lordship; also the house and lands of Aldersbrooke, till his base son, Robert Dudley, shall reach the age of twenty; also all his goods and leases whatsoever, towards the payment of his debts and her better maintenance, saving such as he shall in the sequel appropriate otherwise.

His lordships of Denbigh and Chirk he bequeaths, in the first instance, to his brother the Earl of Warwick, and after his death to his base son Robert Dudley. The same disposition is made of the Castle, Parks, Chaces, and Lands of Kenilworth. "I do give also," he goes on, "to my dear wife, my house and manor of Langley, with all the appurtenances, and the use of a.. the coppice woods there, with the lease of Whitney, until my said base son accomplish the years of one-and-twenty; both which, after, I do give and grant to Robert, my base son, in such sort as shall be limited unto him, with the rest of the lands I give him. If he die before the said one-and-twenty year, then my said wife to enjoy the said lands and leases during her life.

I give him also the leases of Grafton pasture, after the decease of my said wife. I do also desire my good Lord and brother, the lands aforesaid coming to his hands, that it will please him to give some reasonable stipend to the boy, when he comes to more years, for his maintenance. In the meantime, after the decease of Gabriel Bleke and his wife, I do give and grant to the said Robert, all such lands and leases as I have conveyed unto me from the said Gabriel for ever; and the same lands, houses, and leases to enjoy presently after the decease of the said Gabriel Bleke and his wife, now living. I do give and grant to my base son, also, after the decease of my dear wife, the manors of Balsoll and Long Itchington, in the county of Warwick, with all appurtenances. I do likewise give and grant to my said base son the manors of Cleobury and Eurnewood, after the decease also of my said dear wife." Afterwards he further bequeaths to his base son, after the decease of his wife, his house in London, called Leicester House; with provision that, if the said base son shall die without issue, then Leicester House, and also the lordship of Chirk, shall go to his well-beloved son-in-law, the Earl of Essex. It was probably Essex, likewise, whom he had in view in a subsequent clause, providing that certain purchased lands in Wanstead, not included within the Park, after falling in the first instance to his base son, should, if the said base son died without issue, pass to the lord of Wanstead, being any of the heirs of the body of his said dear wife, for ever.

Then, having stated that he had founded an Hospital for twelve poor men at Warwick, and endowed it with

a revenue of two hundred pounds a year, he expresses his confidence, that, if the income shall fall short of what he had estimated, his wife will join with his brother in making any conveyance that may be required, "which shall not hinder her jointure, to the benefit of that poor house;" and he hopes that "God will send her life and ability to provide some means to join some good deed to that house, in finding some number of poor women, such as shall not be idle, but to be set on work in making linen cloth, or such like;" "a work of good charity it will be," he adds, "and I trust it shall not be the less thought on, to join with me in that *I* have begun there." He bequeaths to the Hospital two hundred pounds in money, for a present stock, to relieve its necessities. A crown lease which he had in Wales is further left to Essex; and two scholarships of twenty pounds a year each are directed to be founded by him and the Countess in University College, Oxford. Certain farms in Kent, held of the Church of Canterbury, he bequeaths to his beloved god-son and nephew Sir Robert Sidney (brother of Sir Philip); and it is further provided that, if his base son shall die without lawful issue, all the lands left to him shall descend to Sir Robert, except that the manor of Chirk and Leicester House shall go, as aforesaid, to the Earl of Essex.

Then follow a number of legacies, or bequests of goods and chattels. To his wife he leaves the stuff, or furniture, appertaining to Wanstead, the moiety of that at Leicester House, all that he has with him, which he directs to be sent over to be kept at Langley, and all his plate and jewels not otherwise disposed of. He then

names as his overseers, to undertake the charge of superintending the distribution of his legacies and the payment of his debts, the Lord Chancellor Hatton, the Earl of Warwick, and Lord Howard the High Admiral. "And I do hereby," he says, "appoint and heartily desire them, that they will, for the long good will between us, take it upon them, and to help, assist, and comfort my dear and poor disconsolate wife; . . . not doubting but they shall find her willing every way, to the utmost of her power, to do all I have committed to her charge, not thinking good to trouble any other of my friends but herself with my hard and broken estate, being I know not how many thousand above twenty in debt, and at this present not having in the world five hundred pounds towards it." To the Chancellor, whom he calls his old dear friend, he leaves one of his largest gilt basins and ewers, with his best George and Garter; to his brother, "first, as dear an affection as ever brother bare to other," and, for a remembrance, a cup of gold, with a George, having the French order and the English in one, with a plain gold chain at it. "This token," he says, "he must keep, in remembrance that his brother was of both the orders, and not only so, but also almost the oldest of both the orders in both the realms. But what is this but vanity, and too much vanity for me now to remember them? But my last and best token to him shall be to present a faithful sister and handmaid to him whilst you both live, which I pray God may be many years together." These last words refer, apparently, to Warwick's wife; but their precise meaning is not evident. Other remembrances

are left to the Lord Admiral, whom he had found a most noble friend, to his dear sister of Warwick, to the Earl of Essex, to his dear sister the Countess of Huntingdon, to the Lord Treasurer, the Lord Chamberlain, the Lord North, his father-in-law Sir Francis Knollys, his brother Sir William Knollys, his brother Francis Knollys, and to Sir Thomas Heneage, his good old friend. Finally, he says, "For my servants, I will set down in a bill under my hand what I will have done for them, for I know you, my executrix, shall be hardly able to do for them; yet do I trust to satisfy most of them, and that you will be as good as you may be able to the rest." *

Poor Leicester! it is impossible to read what he has thus written without deep pity for him after all. Whatever he had done, whatever he had been, here was at last the end come to all his greatness, and to all the craft or crime whereby he had climbed or flown so high, and so long kept his pride of place. Reckless and unscrupulous in many things he had clearly enough been; one who did not allow any common obstacle to stand long in the way either of his interests or his passions; whether or no he was either the profound hypocrite and systematic dissembler, or that dealer in still worse acts, that he has been painted by some, and that he was unquestionably believed to be by many in his own day. In any case, he was probably not without some warm human affections; nay, possibly, not without his estimable moral qualities, as well as his brilliant

* *Collins, Memoirs of the Sidneys*, 70—75.

ones of other kinds. He was, at the worst, like every other human being, far from being all bad. If he had committed all or any of the darker deeds that have been laid to his charge, he had the heavier burthen to bear. In this Last Will, by which he divides nearly all that he had to leave between his present wife and his son by Douglas Howard, it seems as if his sole anxiety now were to satisfy the only claims that it was still possible for him to meet. It is not unaffecting to mark the pains that he takes to do this, and also the tone and style of quiet good sense, as well as good feeling, with which he makes his dispositions and arrangements. "Albeit," he says in commencing his task, "there may many imperfections be found with the making of this Will, for that I am no lawyer, nor have any counsel now with me to place things in such form as some are able, yet, as my true meaning is I trust to express, that accordingly it may be interpreted, for I mean to make it as plain as I can." The Will, if not drawn up with perfect technical formality, is characterised by eminent clearness of expression throughout, and conveys a high conception of Leicester's skill and power in writing, when he took pains and did his best. The subdued, one would almost say despondent spirit, too, which pervades it is very remarkable; he states that he was in perfect health; he was far from being an old man; yet he writes as if he were taking leave of the world, as if he already felt and knew that his death was as near as it actually proved to be. The language is that of one in whom all ambition and all hope are quenched. He may have recently had some disgusts

and anxieties to trouble and depress him; but that will hardly account for such an apparently absolute abandonment of all the expectations and prospects, such an utter indifference to "all the uses, of this world." It is true that a person is not apt to get into elevated spirits and to adopt a joyous style in making his will; but a healthy man of only five-and-fifty would not naturally or ordinarily express himself even on such an occasion as Leicester here does. Why, for instance, should he speak of his honours and titles as all now only so many vanities unworthy of remembrance? They were no vainer than they had ever been. There was nothing unlikely in his living to enjoy them for as long again as most of them had yet been in his possession. If it was the thought of having no one to whom to transmit his hereditary dignities that made him thus contemptuous of them, the supply of that defect was not beyond the range of possibility or hope. What was to prevent him from even rising to a loftier pinnacle of greatness and power than any he had ever yet stood upon? If some cloud had for the present come between him and the sunshine of royal favour, he must have known from many former experiences that it would soon pass away, as in fact it did, leaving his sky brighter than ever. Again, why should he assume it to be so much a thing of course that his royal mistress would survive him, would survive him for many years? They were of the same age, and, for anything that appeared, he was quite as likely to witness her funeral as she to issue her commands respecting his. What he says upon this point surely cannot be thought

a mere piece of courtiership; the occasion forbids such a supposition, and the words have far too real a sound. Rather one might suspect something more to be meant than meets the ear, or eye, in the passages in which the Earl speaks of his wife, something of doubt, at least, if nothing more and worse, in so many anxious appeals to her affection, some uneasiness of some kind or other to be hidden in all that never satisfied reiteration of blandishments and assurances of satisfaction. Can it really so have been?

The Countess at least lost no time in commencing her duties as executrix. Letters of administration were taken out by her on the 6th of September, being two days after the Earl's death. Her expedition in regard to another matter was equally remarkable. Within the twelvemonth she had doffed her weeds, and was wedded to a third husband.

Such a marriage naturally turns men's thoughts and tongues back upon the antecedent funeral. But even at the time of Leicester's sudden death divers dark suspicions and rumours had spread abroad. He had left London on one of the last days of August in his usual health. He wrote to Burghley from Maidenhead on the 27th of that month, apologising for having been prevented by the many things he had to dispatch the night before from calling to take leave of him before he went, but adding that he should be back soon. Nothing, therefore, could have been more unexpected than the news which came in about a week after that he was dead. It was said that he had been carried off by fever; but reports of his having been

unfairly made away with soon became so rife, that it was deemed expedient to have certain individuals, with whose names the popular voice had been busy, taken up and examined by the Privy Council. And it was ascertained that a few days' time before the Earl's death, a person of the name of Smith, who is described as a conjuror, and who appears to have had some sort of secret court influence or connexion, having been applied to by the son of Sir James Crofts, the Comptroller of the Household, to give him his advice or help in the case of his father, who had recently been sent to prison and was supposed to be detained there through Leicester's enmity,* had told Crofts that the Bear was tied to the stake, or muzzled, making "a flirt with his thumb" as he spoke, and that his father would be at liberty in less than a month.† Naunton distinctly says that the Earl was reported to have been poisoned, destroyed by a draught which he had prepared for another. There are, however, two versions of this story. One is preserved in Drummond's notes of the Conversations of Ben Jonson:—"The Earl of Leicester gave a bottle of liquor to his lady, which he willed her to use in any faintness; which she, after his return from court, not knowing it was poison, gave him; and so he died." The other version is most fully given in a prose note, or supplement, which was found some years ago by Dr. Bliss, of Oxford, appended to a manuscript copy of the poem called *Leicester's Ghost*, written in a hand of the sixteenth century, and which he has printed

* See *Camden, Elizabeth*, 544. † *Strype, Annals*, III. 269, 270.

in his edition of Wood's *Athenæ Oxonienses*. It is as follows:—

"The author hath omitted the end of the Earl, the which may thus and truly be supplied. The Countess Leicester fell in love with Christopher Blount, Gentleman of the Earl's Horse, and they had many secret meetings and much wanton familiarity; the which being discovered by the Earl, to prevent the pursuit thereof when General of the Low Countries, he took Blount with him, and there proposed to have him made away; and for this plot there was a ruffian of Burgundy suborned, who, watching him in one night going to his lodging at the Hague, followed him and struck at his head with a halbert, or battle axe, intending to cleave his head. But the axe glanced, and withal pared off a great part of Blount's skull. Which wound was very dangerous and long in healing; but he recovered, and after married the Countess; who took this so ill, as that she, with Blount, deliberated and resolved to dispatch the Earl. The Earl, not patient of this great wrong of his wife, purposed to carry her to Kenilworth; and to leave her there until her death by natural or by violent means, but rather by the last. The Countess, also, having suspicion or some secret intelligence of this treachery against her, provided artificial means to prevent [anticipate] the Earl; which was by a cordial, the which she had no fit opportunity to offer him till he came to Cornbury Hall, in Oxfordshire; where the Earl, after his gluttonous manner, surfeiting with excessive eating and drinking, fell so ill that he was forced to stay there. Then the deadly cordial was propounded unto him by

the Countess; as Mr. William Haynes, sometime the Earl's page and then a gentleman of his chamber, told me, who protested he saw her give that fatal cup to the Earl, which was his last draught, and an end of his plot against the Countess, and of his journey, and of himself. And so *fraudis fraude sua prenditur artifex.*"

This is a story resting certainly on a very slight foundation of evidence. Yet it probably conveys to us one of the current rumours of the time; nor, as we shall find in the sequel, is it absolutely without confirmation. From all that has been stated, we seem to be at least entitled to infer that the Countess was with Leicester at Cornbury when he was taken ill and died there. All that is known as to the time of her marriage with Blount is that it had taken place before the middle of August 1589. It is mentioned as a piece of news in a letter to Anthony Bacon, who was then abroad, from his London friend Captain (afterwards Sir) Francis Allen, dated the 17th of that month.*

There is a good deal to be told about Blount which has escaped his professed biographers. But a word or two must first be said concerning some other matters.

Leicester had died far deeper in debt than he had thought himself, or rather than he had been willing to think himself; for of the real state of his affairs he evidently knew nothing. The Queen lamented him with a profusion of tears, professing to weep for the public as well as for her private loss; but, "whereas," says Camden, "he was a debtor to the Crown, his

* *Birch*, I. 56

effects were disposed of at a public sale; for, however gentle the Queen might shew herself in other respects, yet did she very rarely remit what was owing to her treasury."* Everybody has repeated the same statement, seeing nothing in her Majesty's proceeding beyond a proof of either her careful economy or her avarice, according as each has chosen to consider it. To this, we are told, her strongest feelings gave way—even one so strong as her affection for Leicester. But what had her affection for Leicester to do with the case? It was not from him that she exacted the money, but from his heirs, and principally or exclusively from his widow, for whom there is no reason to suppose that she cherished any special regard. Leicester's brother, the Earl of Warwick, it may just be mentioned, speedily followed him to the other world; he died, leaving no issue, on the 20th of February 1590. Sir Henry Ellis has printed a letter, dated the 9th of December 1589, addressed to Burghley by Mr. (afterwards Sir) Arthur Atye, Leicester's Secretary, from whom the Lord Treasurer had desired to have such an account as could be made out at that time of his debts both to her Majesty and others. Atye makes it appear that the sums which the Earl had drawn from the Exchequer on account of the war in the Netherlands either had all been accounted for or were secured by sufficient pledges which had been lodged when the money was obtained. For one loan or advance he had deposited plate to the value of £3000 and better in the Receipt of the Ex-

* *Elizabeth*, 550.

chequer. Of his other debts to the Crown, Atye, who had only come lately into his service, could not then state anything distinctly. "But surely," he says, "his Lordship did not account them to be any very great matters." "Touching his debts to others," he proceeds to say, "I know many; but that they should be so great as I have heard they are set down, namely, that they should amount to £50,000 or upwards, besides the debt for Denbigh [£4000 due to the Crown], I marvel. . . . This I know, that, if it had pleased God he had lived but till an audit which he meant before Christmas last, he would have known all his debts what they were, as well to her Majesty as others, and also would have taken present order for them. For he had expressly given me charge against or at his audit to learn them, and appointed the means how to discharge them. But God took him away before." * The estimate to which Atye alludes is probably what is found in an Inventory of the property left by the Earl preserved among the Harleian Rolls. His debts are there stated at £53,120 8*s.* 5*d.*; while his leases, goods, and chattels, ready money, and money owing to him, are made to amount to £24,777 10*s.* 9*d.* † His estates held in fee, however, do not appear to be included in this valuation.

There would seem, at any rate, to have been claims enow demanding immediate satisfaction or adjustment to occasion much pressure and embarrassment to the Countess, left as she was exposed to the storm, not only

* *Ellis, Third Series*, IV. 75—79.

† *Nichols's Leicestershire*, Vol. I. Part 2nd, p. 538.

without the royal favour and protection which had screened her late husband, but probably with her cousin the Queen for her hardest creditor, and all the power of the Crown used with rigour against her. The circumstances in which she was thus placed may have had more to do with the haste she made in marrying Sir Christopher Blount than can now be clearly shown. She did not mend matters, however, by that piece of precipitation.

But who was Blount? In the first place, certainly not a younger brother of Charles Lord Montjoy, as he is assumed to have been by the historian of the family, the late Sir Alexander Croke.* Even if we could not absolutely disprove this supposition, it would be rendered in the highest degree improbable by everything that is known about Sir Christopher. He was, there can be little doubt, the second son of Thomas Blount, Esq., of Kidderminster.† There is in Kidderminster Church a monument of this Thomas Blount and his wife Marjory, or Margaret, as also an altar tomb of their eldest son Sir Edward Blount. Among the ornaments of the former, is a scroll containing representations of the children of the deceased couple, two sons and two daughters, and a child in swaddling clothes; which are severally distinguished by the initials E. B., *C. B.*, M. B., K. B., G. B. Thomas Blount died in 1569; his wife in 1595; Sir Edward, who married a sister of Lord Abergavenny, in 1630, at the age of seventy-six.‡ He must,

* *Croke Family*, II. 248.

† Camden says that he was sprung from the Blounts of Kidderminster. —*Elizabeth*, 639.

‡ *Nash's Worcestershire*, II. 59.

therefore, have been born in 1554; and Sir Christopher, if he was this Sir Edward's younger brother, could not have come into the world before 1555; so that he would be the Countess of Leicester's junior by some sixteen years at the least.

Anthony Wood relates that, when Cardinal Allen was at Louvain, the chiefs of the English Catholic party abroad put under his care a youth of an honourable family who was come to study there, and that Allen discharged his trust so conscientiously as seriously to injure his health by his close attendance upon his pupil.* It appears from a passage in Camden that that pupil was Blount.† This was before 1565. Captain Allen, in his letter to Anthony Bacon, quoted by Birch, in which he announces the marriage of the Countess of Leicester, describes Blount as the Gentleman of her Horse, and says that he had been knighted in the Netherlands by Lord Willoughby of Eresby, who served for a time as Captain-General of the English forces there after Leicester's final return home in November 1587. There has been, however, a chapter omitted from his history by all the writers who have professed to give an account of him, which places him before us in quite a new light.

Blount, in fact, had a short time before his marriage with the Countess of Leicester been deeply involved in proceedings of a treasonable nature; unless, indeed, he was a spy in the pay of Walsingham, which is, perhaps, not the least probable hypothesis.

On the 20th of July, 1585, Mary Stuart's passionately

* *Athen. Oxon.* I. 616. † *Elizabeth*, 635.

zealous and devoted agent Thomas Morgan writes to her as follows from Paris, where he then lay locked up in the Bastile;—"I heard some days before I was taken prisoner that your Majesty was to be removed to Tutbury, and Sir Amias Paulet should attend upon your Majesty; whereupon, of care of your service, I wrote forthwith to Mr. Christopher Blount, having some charge thereabouts, to have special respect to the honor and service of your Majesty. Sithence which time I have heard that he hath been about Tutbury to view the state of the country and people thereabouts, and to frame intelligence with your Majesty. For about fifteen days past, or thereabouts, there arrived here a special messenger from London, sent hither expressly by Mr. Blount unto me, with letters declaring, by the same, that he was bound to serve and honour the only saint that he knows living upon the ground (so he termed your Majesty); and that means would be found to make an intelligence with your Majesty, wherein he had and would labour though it cost him his life; and so recommended himself to my hands, faith, and friendship, desiring me to have care of him, and that he should not be discovered, and to send him some instructions for your Majesty's better service, declaring withal that he was much grieved to hear of my captivity." * Blount's letters were sent by a gentleman named Robert Poley :† it was with some difficulty that he was prevailed

* *Murdin*, 447.

† Probably a near relation. In a pedigree given in Sir Alexander Croke's *History* (Vol. II., opposite to p. 168), the wife of Thomas Blount of Kidderminster, the supposed father of Sir Christopher, there called *Margaret*, is described as the daughter of William Poley, of Box in Suffolk.

upon to deliver them into any other hands than Morgan's own. Morgan at last had him brought outside of his window so that he could converse with him. "To the end," he proceeds, in a passage, which furnishes a curious and valuable contribution to Blount's biography, "I might the better try the negociation of the gentleman sent hither to me by Blount (for I am always of such as depend or have to do with Leicester, unless I know them, full jealous), I found means, though to my charges, to speak secretly with Poley, wherewith he seemed marvellously well pleased; for that divers reports were in England that I was not alive, but dispatched away. . . . . I found nothing but that he meant well, and a Catholic he sheweth himself to be, and much disposed to see some happy and speedy reformation in that state [the kingdom of England]. And this Poley is at Blount's devotion, and he knoweth that I was a means under God to preserve the life of Blount, and that I had been his friend otherwise, and indeed his letters now sent me do acknowledge the same. So as I have no cause but to conceive well both of Blount for the testimony of his dutiful care of your Majesty, and of Poley for his pains taken, though he did not know the contents of Blount's letters and disposition to serve your Majesty. . . . This Blount is a tall gentleman and valiant, and hath been well brought up by his careful and devout parents, which be good Catholics;* and this Blount is of an ancient house, and his father, who was kin to Leicester, honoured him and

* It is plain from what follows that the father was dead. Morgan's notion apparently was that he was still a good Catholic notwithstanding.

his father much of a long time, but was by him most ungratefully requited in the end. Yet because Leicester is a great tyrant in the realm, where Catholics be so plagued, this Blount and his elder brother being both Catholics, and their mother a notable honest gentlewoman, they are all forced, to their great charges, to fawn upon Leicester, to see if thereby they may live quiet, and not be continually troubled for their faith and consciences; and by Leicester's means they have been more quietly handled than some others, and this is the reason they have in this time followed Leicester, which God knoweth hath been chargeable to them, for Leicester is not born to do good to God's people. This Christopher Blount hath been heretofore partaker of your Majesty's favours in this country, and courteously used by means of your friends and servants; and, being well persuaded of his faith and honesty, I have years past entertained friendship with him, in hope that he might at the last, by reason of his place about Leicester, serve some friendly turn, whereunto he sheweth himself now more resolute than heretofore, and to adventure to some actions, having sent me an alphabet at this time, and demanded some instructions at my hands for your Majesty's better service. And truly I am persuaded that you shall have faithful service at his hands, and means to continue your intelligences in all places; and great privilege through the realm have those that be towards Leicester in these days, whereby they may do your Majesty better service, being otherwise assured to your Majesty as I hold him to be." * He adds that the Lord Montjoy (that is, William, the Seventh Lord,

* *Murdin*, 449.

who was succeeded by his brother Charles, in 1594), was come of Blount's house, or Blount of his (an expression which disposes of the notion that Blount was a younger brother of those peers), so that they are good friends and kinsmen. The father of Lord Montjoy was decayed much before his death; "yet he and his brother," says Morgan, "live in that court, and may perhaps be drawn by Blount's means to your Majesty's service." In conclusion he tells Mary that she may entertain him and send him an alphabet, and treat him further according to her Majesty's wisdom. If Blount really was playing him false, the hot-blooded Welshman was completely taken in; not a breath of suspicion stirred in the sultry atmosphere of his Cimbrian or Cimmerian understanding. His letters are volumes; he must have spent all his time in writing them; what has been quoted is not nearly all that he says to the Scottish Queen in this one about his and her new ally; and, as if it were impossible to exhaust the subject, he returns to it in a Postscript to Curl, her secretary. "Her Majesty," he winds up at last, in a strain of infinite self-satisfaction, "may boldly entertain Blount, if he give the occasion, as I hope he will; for I am sure he honoureth the ground whereupon her Majesty goeth, before Leicester and all his generation, and all that they have in the world besides."

On the 28th of January, 1586, he writes again to Mary;—"Leicester is entered with all magnificence to Holland and Zealand, and with him many honest personages [meaning friends of the Scottish Queen], which will never return with him or serve him there.

If I were at liberty, I should draw some of them to do good service; but in this case I dare not deal with them; albeit some of them have written unto me." He afterwards states that he has recommended Poley to the French ambassador in London "to do him pleasure and service there;" and that the said ambassador and his secretary have since reported well of Poley, "who hath been heretofore in Scotland, and knoweth the best ways into Scotland." He advises her Majesty, if she has no better conveyance, to get the ambassador to send her letters into that country by Poley. "He is a Catholic," he adds, "and Blount hath placed him to be Sir Philip Sidney's man, that he may more quietly live a Christian life under the said Sidney; but I think the said Poley be at this time in the parts of Tutbury, where that Queen's [Elizabeth's] horses be, for that Blount hath given credit to the said Poley, to the end he might thereby do some service to your Majesty; and I gave Blount a few lines to make an intelligence for your Majesty." *

On the 31st of March he writes:—"Leicester, like himself, hath taken the government of Holland and Zealand in his own name when he came thither, contrary to his commission, and trust to him committed; whereupon she of England stormed not a little, terming him by the name of traitor and villain now in his absence. And there be instruments that help to push forward this subject to his ruin. He taketh the matter upon him where he is as though he were absolute king of the country, and hath many personages of good place

* *Murdin*, 480.

out of England about him, the best number whereof desire nothing more than his confusion, and some of them be gone with him rather to avoid the persecution for religion in England than for any good service they wish him. I hear that Mr. William Green and Mr. Blount, of whom I have made mention heretofore to your Majesty, be with Leicester. Some others that be there have demanded me to come into the Low Countries, if I were at liberty to put any helping hand to theirs, to do some good office against Leicester his designments; wherein, if I were at liberty, I might, perhaps, do that good which I cannot in this state. Yet my poor advice and labour shall not want to give Leicester all dishonour, which will fall upon him in the end with shame enough, though for the present he be very strong in the field, and in the towns of that country." * It will be observed that Morgan had not heard from Blount himself of his arrival in the Netherlands; he was not even among those who had urged Morgan to repair thither if he should have it in his power. But the sanguine Welshman's confidence is not for a moment shaken. In a subsequent passage of the same letter he states that, since writing what preceded, he had heard from Poley, who, dating from London, informed him that he had been in the part of the country where her Majesty was, and had there taken means to establish a communication with her. "He was first," he repeats, "recommended unto me by Christopher Blount, who never abused me, but continued well affected to serve and honour your Majesty; and I am of opinion that

* *Murdin*, 494.

you entertain the said Poley, who, by Blount's labours and my advice, is placed with the Lady Sidney, the daughter of Secretary Walsingham, and by that means ordinarily in his house, and thereby able to pick out many things to the information of your Majesty. Blount and he, in favour of your Majesty and by my instruction, have done notable service to the French ambassador at his first arrival in England, whenas he was so narrowly looked into as few or none of the English durst approach his house, much less converse with him or any of his house. According to your wisdom your Majesty may in ordinary sort entertain Poley in writing, and use his labour for the convoy between your Majesty and the French ambassador, and give order there, or here to us, for some consideration of his service, which with time may be very profitable for us. I have said he is in a place to discover many things, which he beginneth to do to the disadvantage of the common enemies."*

Morgan's restless intrigues had a tragic enough issue; they mainly produced Babington's conspiracy, which the blood of the fourteen confederated devotees was not thought sufficient to extinguish, or to atone for, till that of Mary Stuart herself had been added; but his present position might suit a comedy. This Poley, or Pooley, who by his advice had been placed in the house of Walsingham, could not have been more commodiously disposed of for the objects of that minister and his own. Walsingham, it has been remarked, had been once cheated, when the assurances of Charles the

* *Murdin*, 500.

Ninth and Catherine de' Medici hoodwinked him in the case of the Saint Bartholomew; the consequence of which lesson was that he was never cheated again. But we might go farther, and almost apply to Walsingham Byron's compliment to woman—

"But once deceived, and ever more deceiving;"

for he seems to have acquired the passion of a gambler for the hazards of trick and stratagem, as well as the delight of a spider in extending and complicating his web of intrigue and cross intrigue in all directions. His whole policy was a system or series of over-reaching refinements; his highest enjoyment in existence was to watch the gradual growth of some plot against the state, around the workers in which he had wound, or was all the while winding, his secret threads; with his will no conspiracy, however dangerous, would ever be touched till it was at the point of explosion. Till that last moment it was a thing to be cherished, rather; an interesting and beautiful phenomenon, to be contemplated in silent admiration, and which care was to be taken that not a breath or movement should disturb. We may imagine how much more than a match he had made himself by this sort of practice for such a precipitate enthusiast as our friend Morgan. With whatever views Poley may have set out, it is certain that he had by this time been bought by the English minister. All Morgan's letters and Mary Stuart's answers were before delivery brought by him to Walsingham, when they were decyphered or copied; and it is to the transcripts thus obtained that we are indebted for the publication of

them in the latter part of the last century, and the evidence which they supply both of Poley's villainy and of Morgan's self-satisfaction while playing so absurd a part.

It may be that Blount was also deceived by Poley. In a subsequent part of this same letter Morgan says:—"Either Raleigh, the minion of her of England, is weary of her, or else she is weary of him; for I hear she hath now entertained one Blount, brother of the Lord Montjoy, being a young gentleman whose grandmother she may be for her age and his; whereof I thought good to advertise your Majesty, wishing the same to entertain Christopher Blount, according to the occasions that he shall or may offer unto your Majesty; and it shall be to some purpose that you make the said Poley to understand that you have by many means occasion to think well of Christopher Blount, who is for the present in Holland with Leicester, and hath sent for the said Poley to come to him, and hath also sent the said Poley an alphabet to be sent to me, which I have this day received. I know Blount's mind, and confidence he hath in me more than in most men living, having been his friend in his prosperity and his greatest distress. He hath some charge and credit where he is, and his meaning is, for the service of God and advantage of the King of Spain,—to further the delivery of some notable towns in Holland and Zealand to the King of Spain and his ministers, wherein nevertheless he desireth to proceed with my poor advice and labours, himself being for the present in a notable place to do great service to all Christendom, by aiding to the

expulsion of heretics, which usurp and invade the possessions of his Majesty Catholic." Surely Morgan could not have asserted all this out of his own head; he must, apparently, have received some communication from Blount to the effect he states. Whether Blount in thus continuing to profess himself a friend of the Queen of Scots was deceiving the one party or the other, does not make much difference in so far as his respectability is concerned. "If I find it confirmed," Morgan adds, "that Blount, my Lord Montjoy's brother, is stalled in the good grace of her of England, as I hear he is, I think it shall be necessary to revoke Christopher Blount out of Holland, to serve your Majesty's turns by means of the amity and credit he hath with the other Blount, whereof I shall think and do as the time shall permit."* The Welshman does not seem to have the faculty of doubting of anything.

He makes no more mention, however, of either Blount or Poley, although his letters are continued for three or four months longer. Mary informs him on the 20th of May that she has yet heard nothing from either one or other;† but on the 27th of July she writes to him that she had only recently received his letter of the 20th of July of the preceding year, in which he had first given her an account of Blount. How it had been detained so long does not appear. Mary evinced much more caution than her Welsh agent had done. The letter, she says, seemed to have been intended to be sent by means of Blount, but it had come to her hands accompanied by another letter which

* *Murdin*, 502. † *Murdin*, 515.

she judged to be from Poley, inasmuch as the writer thanked her for some reward he had received beyond seas. "Otherwise," she says, "the letter being an unknown hand, without subscription, or name therein, I am not assured from whence it came, Blount himself being now with Leicester. Neither can I tell by whom to send back my answer again to Poley for his offers made courteously unto me, because he hath named no particular man unto me unto whom he hath committed the sending of his, which came with an infinite number that divers others confusedly sent me; and to commit his name to others by guess, as I am not accustomed to do it, but for the most security keep them that I have to deal with all unknown as much as I can one to another, as well for fear that through apprehending one some other be discovered, as for shunning of jealousy conceived ordinarily amongst them to the overthrow of the whole, I dare not hazard to address my answer to the said Poley before I may understand and hear from him and you to whose hands I shall commit the same. Wherein although the delay be long, yet fear of inconvenience may excuse my taking of this course; and I pray you, so soon as you can, to show him thus much from me, and by his next or yours to give me particular knowledge of the way he hath already found hither; and thereby he shall be answered, God willing, to your contentment and his."* The long detention of Morgan's letter would seem to imply something more than a difficulty in getting it conveyed to its destination. Had Poley kept it back while

* *Murdin*, 533.

undetermined what course he should take, or till he could manage to sell himself to Walsingham at his own price? Blount, we see, does not appear in the transaction at all; and possibly the letter may never have passed through his hands.

Blount, however, is a very questionable character. There is in the Cotton collection a letter of his to Leicester, dated from Utrecht, the 19th of April, 1588, which, whether or no it may have taken in Leicester, can hardly be read now with perfect confidence in the writer's good faith. By this time, it will be remembered, Leicester had left the Netherlands for good, and the Lord Willoughby of Eresby had been appointed Captain-General in his stead. Blount, who had probably accompanied his old patron to England in the preceding November, had since returned to Holland, where he remained in command of his company. It appears that he had been made uneasy by not having heard from Leicester since he came over; but he begins his letter a far way off from that point. "My good Lord," he says, "By my other, from the Hague, dated the 11th of this present, I entreated your Honor to excuse, if need were, the Lord Willoughby for any objections might be made against him for not according these Provinces, and appeasing of all mutinies, with that expedition her Majesty might expect he should." Here is a fair show of candour in regard to Willoughby, or even of something more; let nobody say that Blount is making eager assault upon the heart of Leicester by the disparagement of his successor. If he afterwards falls into that strain, it is unintentionally, almost reluctantly, and in spite of

himself. He cannot help letting out that he regrets his old general, and also that he suffers in the opinion of the new one, or at least suspects that he does, from being known to entertain that sentiment. "I hope, my Lord," he goes on after a sentence or two, "you hold my faith too dear to suffer me willingly to perish in performing but my duty to you." Then, having related what he professes to consider a slight put upon him by Willoughby, for which, he intimates, his Lordship seemed afterwards disposed to apologise, he adds, "I hope such his proceeding with me hath no ground given by myself, and not of any distrust he hath I could do better offices to you than he would be willing to further himself. I carried not dishes at the feast he made to the Counts Maurice and Hohenloe at the Hague; it may be some part of that unkindness he conceived of that remaineth with his Lordship undigested yet." Afterwards he declares he is not sorry though Lord Willoughby be angry with him, seeing that the course that nobleman is taking is sure in the end to tell to the credit of Leicester. Willoughby, it seems, is generally thought to lean already too much to one faction, swayed by Sir William Drury, who again was wholly under the influence of the partisans of Prince Maurice. "God send," continues Blount, "some be not drawn by this means to forget what becometh themselves. For I must needs speak my fancy that the one is as like to fall in love with the commandment of an army as the other with the desire of governing a town of war, and both able alike to exercise their offices. I hope her Majesty will hearken to the request

will be made from some of those that are best affected on this side, and then I doubt not but your Honour shall have satisfaction, either by coming yourself or disposing the government upon such a one as yourself shall think fit to exercise such a charge, and will honourably protect those who have showed themselves affectionate servants of yours." He now states that he is in much doubt as to how he should act in consequence of never having heard from the Earl, and the more inasmuch as Lord Willoughby professed to have received directions from Leicester quite inconsistent with the instructions given to himself on leaving England. He concludes—"I beseech you I may understand your pleasure by this bearer my servant, whom I have sent over of purpose, because he should return to me with speed and deliver to me your mind in safety. And so, wishing to your Lordship continuance of health and increase of honour, I end, this 19th of April, from Utrecht, whence I know not now when I shall depart with my company, Your Honour's most assured in all duty, CHR. BLOUNT." *

It seems to be pretty clear from this letter, for one thing, that Blount was no longer in Leicester's confidence. The change, too, had apparently been sudden, and occasioned by something that had come to Leicester's knowledge since Blount and he parted. Blount had come over entrusted with certain private instructions from the Earl; Willoughby professed to have since received his directions or advice to follow quite a different course; and no farther communication had been made

* *Cott. MS. Galb. D.* III. p. 213.

to Blount than if he were not in existence. It is evident, moreover, that Blount believes Willoughby's assertions to be true. Lastly, he is manifestly in no inconsiderable degree perplexed and alarmed. If his life was ever sought by Leicester, it must have been soon after this letter was written. Plainly nothing of the kind had as yet happened; and in little more than four months after this, Leicester's own life was suddenly struck at and ended, whether by the visitation of God or by a human hand.

It must have been soon after this, too, in all likelihood, though not perhaps while Leicester lived, that Blount was knighted by Willoughby. It would be difficult to understand his being knighted by Willoughby at all upon the supposition that he gave a true account of his relations with that commander in his letter to Leicester. We should rather be justified in inferring, from his being selected for such an honour, that Willoughby knew or believed him to be his man and not Leicester's. Possibly, indeed, there may have been some literal or superficial truth in what he stated. It may have been the fact, for instance, that he carried no dish at the feast given by Willoughby to the two Counts at the Hague; and perhaps he was not asked to carry any. He does not say that he refused.

But what are we to think of his being employed either by Willoughby or by Leicester, in any capacity, after the detection of his intercourse with Morgan? Either he had been, from the first and all along, the instrument of Walsingham in that business, or, if he was originally honest in his professions to Morgan, he

had, after the detection of what he was about, made his peace with the Government by a double treason, by consenting to betray the cause for which he had already become a traitor. It is remarkable that no allusion to his share in these dark transactions appears ever to have been made, either by himself or any other party, on any subsequent occasion, not even when the circumstances would seem to have most naturally provoked such a retrospect. Morgan's letters, and all their disclosures, in so far at least as he was involved in them, were passed over on all hands in the most reverential silence. That part of Blount's history appears, indeed, to have been kept a profound secret till the letters were published after the lapse of nearly two centuries. It must have been perfectly known, nevertheless, in his own day, to the leading members of the government, to Walsingham and Burghley, and most probably also to Leicester and to Elizabeth herself. It would not help to reconcile her Majesty to her cousin's impatient *mésalliance*.

§ 5.

But let us now see what manner of life the Countess and her new husband appear to have actually led together. Upon this subject it so chances that we have more evidence, and of a more illustrative kind, than is usually, or rather indeed except very rarely, to be found in such cases. The collections of Antony Bacon, preserved at Lambeth, contain about thirty letters of the Countess of Leicester and of Sir Christopher Blount,

written after their marriage. Dr. Birch, who took transcripts of them, which are in the British Museum,* has inserted six or seven of them in his "Memoirs of the Reign of Elizabeth;" but he, of course, selected chiefly those that threw some light upon public transactions. Some of the others are more to our purpose. In such a work as the present, in which we are confined to recorded facts, or what profess to be such, and are precluded from the exhibition of character by dialogue, as from all the other resources of fiction, genuine letters, in which alone the personages of the story can speak for themselves, are among the most precious of our materials. Hitherto we have got at little beyond the mere chronology of Lettice Knollys's external life; we shall now learn something of herself,—not the whole truth, but yet what, rightly read and understood, is the truth, and nothing but the truth, so far as it goes. We shall have her at least stating her own case, a position in which she could not fail to show forth something of what she was, even if every sentence she uttered were a falsehood. But the letters of a mother to her son, such as all those that we have of hers are, with the exception of one which is to her husband, are likely to contain as little of intentional falsehood as perhaps any human compositions.

The letter, however, of earliest date in the collection is from Blount. Sir Christopher had probably managed to ingratiate himself with the young Earl of Essex, when they served together in the Netherlands, and one of the principal advantages of his marriage with the Countess

* *Sloane, MS.* 4124.

must be considered to have been its making him step-father to the Earl, now, since Leicester's death, the almost declared royal favourite. He appears, at all events, to have kept on the best terms with Essex from the time they became thus related; cultivating his good opinion by ready services of all kinds, as well as by the profusest protestations of attachment and devotion. The present letter is dated the 10th of September, 1595, and appears to be written from Drayton Basset, in Staffordshire, the ordinary residence of Blount and the Countess. It relates to some county business of which, as one of the magistrates, he had taken the management under the direction or in the interest of Essex, who was Lord-Lieutenant. In a commission, or paper of instructions, sent down from the Council, some error had been committed, which Blount represents as of a very serious nature. "Let us," he says, "have this fault (which may bring us in hazard of our lives) repaired; or your commandment to me to persuade as it now standeth, and you shall see how my neighbours will hold me from hazarding my neck; although I will swear to do what I can to break the same when my loss may better your fortune; which I hope to see one day such as I desire, and in the mean time will rest wholly your Honour's most faithful servant, CHR. BLOUNT." In a postscript he adds;—"Your Lordship's mother greets you, and craves her excuse in accompanying your sisters."

There are two other letters of this year, both from the Countess. One, dated from Drayton Basset the 11th of December, is an application in behalf of her cousin, Dr. Boleyn, Dean of Lichfield, who had

commenced a suit before the Council of the Marches of Wales for the reduction of a lease granted by his predecessor in a living to which he had lately been presented. The case is very distinctly stated by the Countess, whose request to her son is that he will put his hand to a letter to the Welsh Council which she incloses, and also get the Lord Chamberlain and the Lord Admiral to do the same. Boleyn, she says, "feareth, unless he may be somewhat countenanced by his good friends, by writing to the said Council to desire them that the matter may have (and the rather at your request) such speedy hearing and determination as, in equity and conscience, should be thought fit, he shall be long delayed in his suit, to the great loss and hindrance of his present fortune. I should therefore be glad the poor Dean might have what favour in his case could conveniently be afforded him, and the rather in regard that he is our kinsman and my good neighbour, and also keepeth a very good [table?] for the relief of his poor neighbours about him." The letter gives a favourable impression of the writer's business talent, and shows her to have been perfectly mistress of the established forms and decencies of expression with which it was customary to veil such transactions. It shows kindness of heart, too, however, and a readiness to oblige, as others of her letters likewise do.

The other letter belonging to this year had also been written in December, but the day is not given. It is as follows:—"Having so convenient a messenger as this, I may not omit, sweet Robin, to salute you with my heartiest affection. He shall tell you how we do in

these parts, and how fearfully we hearken after the Spaniards, whose malice God bless us all from. I hope your mistress makes of you as of her best servant, and chiefest hand to defend her against that wicked generation. My Friend prepares his arms and himself in readiness to do you service when time is. And so the Almighty bless you, and send, if they dare come, you may be a scourge to them. I end with my dearest well-wishings, and remain your mother in faithfulest affection, L. LEICESTER." By her *Friend* she means her husband; it is the term she always uses, and it is one which is not yet quite laid aside in some parts of the country in this sense. In a postcript she adds; "My sister Garret humbly salutes you." *Garret* is the same name with *Gerard;* but the genealogists make no mention of a daughter of Sir Francis Knollys married to a person of that name. Her sister Garret appears to have resided with the Countess. Was she a sister of Blount's, for whom, as well as for himself, he had secured free quarters by his marriage?

The letter that comes next in the order of time is dated the 23rd of January, 1595 (that is, 1596), and is from Blount. It lets out something of the character or temper of the man. A dispute had sprung up between Essex, for whom Blount, as usual, is acting in his capacity of one of the justices, and the citizens and burgesses of Lichfield, who had not only instituted proceedings at law, but, if we may believe Blount, had conducted themselves in their last corporation sessions, in a mutinous and almost rebellious manner. He recommends that a summary and high-handed course should

be taken with them. "For my opinion is," he says, "that by making some few who were chief in this action to answer their disorder before the Lords, you shall not only check (?) them in the cause which, by strong hand, they seem to hold against your Lordship, but shall make the whole county take notice of your might; which is not the smallest cause makes me instruct your Honour to follow this advantage; that after some of these headstrong wranglers have kissed this [rod] they may say to their neighbours, after their return, it had been better to have trusted to your mercy than prove your force. To requite one Dyett, a lawyer, whom, by reading this letter inclosed, you shall find to be the supporter of these men's misdemeanours, your Honour might do well to acquaint the Lord Keeper to suspend his practice until he have, in some good sort, acknowledged his gross offence. These things I thought fit to recommend unto your Lordship's consideration, that, out of doing justice, your power might appear," &c. The proper pretext, it will be observed, is never omitted in these propositions for expediting the course of law by a touch of authority.

Then comes a letter to the Earl from his mother, which is a loving mother's letter all over, and deserves to be given in full. It is endorsed as having been received in February 1596, and is as follows:—"Your Lordship is grown, I will not say slothful, but somewhat sparing of your pen, in relieving your absent poor friends both with news of your welfare, and other accounts [of things] there happening, which we cannot but desire to hear of this dangerous time. Wherefore,

do not think to excuse yourself by much business, which I know you want not; for I must have you, notwithstanding, bestow some time a few idle lines on your mother, to whom they are most welcome, and who otherwise may grow jealous that you love her not so well as she deserves, which blot I know you will take away. And, as she hath made you the chief comfort of her life, so I doubt not of your noble nature, but that you will be careful to maintain it with all childlike kindness. So, sweet Robin, praying the Almighty to bless you with all most honourable happy fortune, I end, remaining ever your mother infinitely loving you, L. Leicester.—I pray you let us know what shall become of us, and where we shall fortify against the Spaniards. My sister Garret recommends her humble duty, and my friend his obedient service at your commandment." The sense of undeserved neglect never expressed itself with more dignity or with more delicacy. And how affectionate and insinuating the whole letter is!

Several of the Countess's letters which are without dates may, perhaps, be best assigned to about this period, though the exact order in which they were written cannot be determined. Here is one:—"My dearest Robin, Your kind memory is exceedingly welcome to her, that accounteth it her greatest happiness to have for the staff of her age so worthy and loving a son. It seems, the time approacheth wherein it will be seen what a jewel your prince and country hath of you. The Lord turn all to the best for England's good and your honour. Sweet Robin, you show not your kindness

least to me in advancing the credit of my Friend, who sufficiently you know, and whose heart rests devoted wholly to your service. Your countrymen here desire to have [him] your lieutenant, which I hope you will not omit, being a step to further honour. The idle wench, your sister, threatens revenge on you for hitting her evermore so right. We wish you often with us to ease your burthened mind with some country sports; for we think of no enemies till you remember [remind] us, so far are we from hearing foreign news. The Almighty bless you, my dear son, with all happy fortunes, and give me ever the comfort I have of you. So I rest your mother deservedly affecting you, L. LEICESTER." In a postscript, the Countess proposes that he should meet her and his sister at the house of a Mr. Sheldon, at Weston, where they are to pay a visit in about three weeks. "If leisure might serve you," she says, "to cross us there, and that we might know the day to meet you, we should be glad, and the mistress of that house very proud." And then she adds, "My sister Garret in humble duty salutes her noble master." Essex's sister here mentioned was probably his eldest sister, Penelope Lady Rich, who, perhaps, spent as much of her time with her mother as with her husband. His other sister, Dorothy, had been the wife of Sir Thomas Perrot, after whose death she married Henry Percy, ninth Earl of Northumberland.

Another of the undated letters is a short note, beginning—"Considering the indisposition my Friend left you in at his coming away, sweet Robin, we both can hardly out of our love be satisfied till we be from yourself

ascertained of your perfect good estate, which God make happy in the highest degree." She then requests him to favour the bearer in a small suit he has to make to him. Another is as follows:—"Your excuse is so reasonable, sweet Robin, as it must be taken; but, if you had come this night, you had found a knot of good company here together, and the idle housewife, your sister, in one of her worst humours, solemnly disposed in doubt that her beloved daughter should be a little sick. I like well you take your time. God bless you, and prosper all your noble occasions; and love her who remains ever your mother, in dearest affection, L. LEICESTER.—My Friend humbly kisses your hands." . . . .

Blount accompanied Essex on the expedition which resulted in the brilliant and decisive descent at Cadiz, on the 21st of June, in this year; and Birch has printed part of a letter, in which he gives an account of the affair to Lady Rich. It is dated from Cadiz (or *Cales*, pronounced in one syllable, as Cadiz was then commonly called by the English), the 5th of July, and is endorsed as having been received on the 5th of August. Blount distinguished himself on this occasion; but for our present purpose it will be sufficient to give so much of his letter as may afford any indication of the terms on which he stood with his wife's relations. It begins;—"Madam, Albeit the worthy desert of your noble brother will come to your hearing with greater expedition than these my letters may have access to your presence; yet, to confirm the first report you shall hear thereof, and to witness that above all things I desire to be held

in friendly esteem of you, I have in brief set down to you as much as were fit to be declared, in as ample a discourse as the worthiness of his acts hath deserved memory of that which hath been done." And it concludes;—"This victory being discoursed unto you in the briefest manner I may, it resteth,—now that fortune, very honour, and wealth hath accompanied the victors,—it resteth that I may commend my duty unto you, and salute my Lord your husband's absence with grief, whom I wish had been a partaker of all the glory those shall enjoy that may challenge any interest to have been doers in this action. It were too tedious to write to all my friends, your well-wishers, of this our blessing; but I must entreat you to excuse me inquired after, and salute them from me, as mindful of them all, and in especial dutiful and friendly unto yourself, whom I do honour as much as I can, though not so much as you deserve. From Cales, near Spain, this 5th of July, 1596. Your servant, more faithfully than ladies use to be mindful, CHR. BLOUNT." The epistolary style of the age was one of florid courtesy; and Blount's letters are extremely ambitious in that respect; but his professions do not flow with much ease or natural felicity. He seems neither sincere himself, nor assured in regard to the person to whom he writes. The family correspondence shows, however, that he was in habits of familiar intercourse with the sisters and brothers of his wife, as well as with her children by her first husband. On the 20th of this month of July, it may be mentioned by the way, Lady Leicester lost her father, Sir Francis Knollys.

The following short note from the Countess is endorsed as having been received by Essex in October of this year, which would be about two months after his return to England, crowned with victory and glory:—"It were pity but your good Lordship should be a little troubled sometimes with a few idle womanish lines, lest you should grow out of use. And therefore I must tell you, that you are much beloved and greatly honoured in this desolate corner. Not according to the fashion of your courtly mistresses, but in our true country sincerity, we will ever pray for the height of your happiness. And I rest, ever your mother, infinitely loving you, L. LEICESTER.—Sweet Robin, as your leisure serves, let me hear sometimes how the world goeth with you. My Friend rests wholly and faithfully devoted to your service." No morose moralist, evidently, was the Countess; it is in a very different style that in the end of this same year, the Lady Bacon writes to the Earl touching the reports about his "court mistresses," adjuring him not to make sorrowful the heart of his good and virtuous wife, said to be now again with child; "for it is thought she took before to heart, and that her last did not comfortably prosper." It is right, however, to add, that Essex, in his answer, solemnly protests his entire innocence in regard to such matters, ever since his departure from England towards Spain.*

* See the correspondence in *Birch*, II. 218, *et. seq.* Lady Bacon exercised an anxious superintendence over Essex's morals as to various points. Among some unpublished letters of hers, preserved at Hatfield, is one "particularly wishing the Queen and her court would hear and profit by good preaching, and expressing her concern upon being informed by a courtier of the Earl's being a terrible swearer." *Birch, in Add. MS.* 4160.

A short undated note may probably best be placed here :— "As busy as your good lordship is, I must still trouble you with a few idle lines, to procure some requital of kindness from you; having seen the day when you would not have been so slack towards some one of your favoured mistresses, though they did bear much; and so must I, who can with more patience arm myself with the assurance of your love to me, which cannot fail in substance, howsoever slow in ceremonies. And therefore I rest, as always, your mother, infinitely loving you, L. LEICESTER."

Perhaps the following note from Blount, may also have been written about this time :— "By many your mother's letters to your Lordship, it is given you to understand that I live. Wherefore, your Honour being well ascertained thereof, both from her and now under my own hand, can best resolve how to dispose thereof to your own advantage and my contentment; which is then in greatest perfection, when to the one I am deemed a good husband, and to the other known to remain a most faithful servant, so long as I shall bear the name of CHR. BLOUNT." Or this may belong to the next year, 1597. Two other letters of Blount's are dated in May of that year. In one, of the 3rd, he tells Essex that the bearer, Mr. Edward Lyttelton, will inform him of certain scandalous speeches that had been given out respecting his last expedition to Spain, by one Chapman, a base knave, whom he recommends his Lordship to have sent for by the Council. He also requests Essex to send him a proper authority for those gentlemen of the county whom his Lordship usually

termed Muster-Masters, and sometimes Deputy-Lieutenants;—a curious fragment of the early history of this office. The other letter is without the day of the month. It relates apparently to a visit that had been paid by the Lord Deputy of Ireland, who at this time was Thomas Lord Burgh of Gainsborough, probably while on his way to court, at a house of Essex's, where he had been received and entertained by the Countess and Sir Christopher. "What welcome your guest hath received," writes Blount, "is fittest himself make report of. .... This business at an end, I attend upon your farther command, as one who thinketh himself in nothing more happy than to be daily commanded in your service; and so leave your Lordship to all increase of happiness, which I envy your fortune, who am nought but what you please to esteem me." At the same time the Countess writes; "We have here entertained your guest, sweet Robin, I hope to your honour and high liking, where nothing wanted but your presence to beautify your old house, and grace all the rest. . . . My Friend, likewise, who hath been here your steward, hath not been least careful to see all things well, as you shall hereafter by your officers understand." There is another short note from the Countess, also dated in this month; but it is merely a recommendation of the bearer to the good offices of her son in a matter which has called him to town. There is always a cordial earnestness in the way in which she makes such applications.

In the new expedition which was fitted out against Spain in the summer of this year, Essex, who was again Commander-in-Chief, appointed Blount his first

Colonel; and Birch has printed the greater part of a letter written by Sir Christopher from Weymouth, on the 26th of June, giving an account of the arrival of the land forces at that rendezvous, and of the measures that had been taken to find them maintenance till they could be embarked. It may have been shortly before this that a short undated note of Blount's was written, in which he speaks of having received an appointment through the Earl. "Myself," he perorates, in his usual subservient style, "for the credit is laid upon me by your means in this public service, acknowledge whose and by whom I am that I am; and will not be in fortune, knowledge, or adventure other than your only faithful servant, CHR. BLOUNT." Lord Rich, by-the-bye, who no doubt regretted having staid at home the last time, when the adventure had turned out so profitable a one, was a volunteer in the present expedition. And Charles Blount Lord Montjoy, whom we shall encounter in the sequel standing in so peculiar a relation to Rich, was Essex's Lieutenant-General, or second in command. This expedition, however, was far from proving so successful as the last. In the first instance, indeed, the fleet, after having been at sea for some days, was forced to put back by stress of weather, and it was with difficulty that it got again into port about the middle of July. Two undated notes from the Countess were probably written in the interval between this return of her son and his setting out again in the latter end of the following month. At first she would appear to have merely had a general intimation from the Earl of his safe arrival and of that of her husband.

In answer to this she says;—"You must imagine, my dearest Robin, how welcome your happy lines were to your careful (*anxious*) mother, who, with all inquiries and hearkenings, could not be ascertained (*certainly informed*) of your welfare; which now doth more joy me than to have the King of Spain's Indies. And much gladder shall I be if, with your contentment, her Majesty might stay you upon good terms for this year, the time being so far passed, and sea travel in winter so troublesome and dangerous. I can no more, but pray unto God to bless and prosper all your noble attempts and actions, now and whensoever, and always rest, in true affection, your mother infinitely loving you, L. LEICESTER." In a postscript she subjoins;—"I thank you, sweet Robin, for your pretty fine token, which I take kindly, and will much esteem it for your sake." Then she desires him to make much of "this honest little flight," meaning, apparently, the bearer of the letter, who, she says, had taken such pains to see her, and was devoted towards the Earl's kinswoman, Betty Garret. "And I," she adds, "dislike not the man." She concludes:—"My sister Garret and we all pray for you. I must remember also to your special love and favour my dearest Friend, who only your love commands beyond himself and all contentment. I am troubled with beggarly rascals, as never any was, who are bold in your absence." This last was a common grievance of people living in the country in those days, but would be borne the less patiently by the Countess, little accustomed as she had been to be without a male protector. Her other note, if it is to be assigned to this

date, must be supposed to have been written after she had heard the particulars of the peril her son had escaped. It is as follows:—"I am now sorry, my dearest Robin, that my hap was not to be nearer when I might have seen as well as heard how blessedly you have overpassed those dangerous hazards that yet I am afraid to think of. The Lord of heaven be praised for it, who ever be your safeguard, and grant that my eyes may see their happiness again in you, to my heart's comfort, upon the achieving your noble enterprises to your heart's content; which the better will proceed if, sweet Robin, you be mindful and thankful to Him that so miraculously and mightily hath preserved you. To whose merciful protection, even as mine own soul, I commend you, and ever rest your mother inestimably loving you, L. LEICESTER.—If passengers come, let me receive two lines of comfort from you. My sister Garret recommends her humble service, and heartily prays for your safe return." Very possibly, however, this letter may have been written on some other occasion.

From this second Spanish expedition, commonly called the Island Voyage, as having had for its chief incident a plundering attack upon some of the Azore Islands, the adventurers returned to England about the end of October, all probably a good deal out of humour. We have Blount writing to Essex from the country on the 3rd of November, that various troubles, which had sprung up during his absence, had so damaged his estate, that he would require to remain for some time among his tenants to reduce things to better order, if,

he remarks, he do not chance in the attempt only to do himself more mischief. "Wherefore," he continues, "except it be to do you service, or hope given from your Lordship that your mother's travel and mine may sort to better contentment than hitherunto hath been afforded, I will continue here, with my accustomed resolution to do you service when you call on me, and leave to envy any whose duties are better accepted of from the highest [meaning the Queen], though their zeal and willingness shall not exceed mine, who ever remain your Lordship's most faithfully devoted."

One object of Blount's coming up to town at this time would have been to take his seat as one of the members for the county of Stafford. He had been returned, apparently during his absence at sea, to the parliament which met on the 24th of October. The Countess, having heard from her son soon after he had got back to Plymouth about the end of that month, had replied in the following letter, part of which Birch has printed:—"You can hardly imagine, my dear sweet son, how joyful these lines of your hand hath made me; for, although my hope gave me ever well of your happy and victorious fortunes, yet my love in a womanish heart could not be without some fear and doubts of you and my best Friend, while you were in danger of winds and enemies, which God be praised for delivering you safe from, and blessing you with some happy success, though not so good as you were near and did deserve. But God will not you should break the proud Spaniard's back at one blow. He reserves somewhat for another

time, knowing your invincible mind must be working, which will be their scourge, I hope. You thank me for my best Friend, who I am glad if he hath done you service. You may see what power you have over me, that have not sticked to displeasure myself to please you; for nothing could get him from me, yourself excepted, which I hope now hereafter you will consider of, especially if we may not be encouraged with some better favour than heretofore. But my friends there [at Court] make me believe that her Majesty is very well prepared to hearken to terms of pacification, and it tarries only your coming and solicitations; which if you find, then may both my Friend and myself with double comfort make a winter's journey, and we will come presently up, if so you think it good, that it be to any purpose or likelihood to obtain that favour, without which I live there, as you know, with the greater disgrace, and put ourselves to more charge than is for our ease, be it not to do you service or ourselves good, which let rest in your will to command and consider of. Also, if you will have me come, you must send a coachman and horses for me; for my coachman is lately dead, and my horses altogether unready. I hear our house is already, too, so well filled, as, if I come, you will have no room there for yourself. But your will be done, all excuse set aside. So saith my Friend, who I cannot yet spare; otherwise he should wait on you. Our Sheriff here hath done him wrong and disgrace in preferring his son Dudley to the first place of Knight of the Shire, which the whole country elected my Friend unto; but both he and Sir Edward Lyttelton do hope

his person shall pay." Here some words are wanting. Somebody, it is then observed, "will remember both his and my Lord Dudley's kindness, who was a special actor therein, notwithstanding he knew of your letters in the behalf of my Friend." And the letter concludes, "So, sweet Robin, hoping you will spare our travel till fairer ways or weather, unless it be to special purpose, I end, praying God to bless you with increase of honour and all happiness, to my endless comfort, who doth rest your mother infinitely loving you, L. LEICESTER."

Perhaps it may have been about this time that a short undated letter was written by the Countess, recommending to Essex a poor old servant of hers, who had a cause; and also renewing a former request in favour of the appointment of Mr. Sergeant Gawdy to the Mastership of the Rolls. "My Friend and I," she says, "entreat you will be pleased to consider how meet a man he is every way for it, and how hardly you will find so honest and so thankful a man of his coat to bestow that favour on, nor, as we believe, any that out of true honesty will be more at your devotion. So, out of my dearest love, I beseech the Almighty to bless you with long life, to make you great on earth and rich in heaven. This is his prayer also whose service rests devoted to you. Your mother infinitely loving you, L. LEICESTER." Gawdy, however, did not get the place.

In December the Countess writes again as follows:— "You gave us an alarm, sweet Robin, to make us believe we should see you. But I hope your stay is to

your better contentment. Otherwise you had made the company of Drayton proud with your presence. I shall exceedingly long to hear of your good satisfaction, which I wish might somewhat fit with your deserts and heart's desire, as my trust is it will for all the cross-working of your subtle enemies. My Friend is now to come up very shortly to the Term about some business; and, were it not for the unseasonable time and foul travelling, I should accompany him to see you. Especially if matters stood so well as you might hope to obtain some favour for us, then I would come also presently up; otherwise a country life is fittest for disgraced persons. But, if you find reason to wish my coming, then must you presently send some coach horses to fetch me, for my own will never be able to draw me out of the mire. I pray you ask my sister of Warwick's counsel, and my sister Layton's, in this case, and let me hear accordingly from you by this bearer. So, wishing you as to my own heart, my dear son, I ever rest your mother infinitely loving you,

L. LEICESTER."

This letter also is published by Birch. Her sisters Warwick and Layton are the Countess Dowager of Warwick, relict of Leicester's elder brother Ambrose Dudley, and her own sister Elizabeth, married to Sir Thomas Layton, or Leighton. Her expression about the life fittest for disgraced persons may recal to the reader's remembrance the similar words used by Essex's poor father in writing to Elizabeth, some two or three-and-twenty years before. She herself would appear to have lived out of favour, and mostly in a state of rustication,

almost ever since then. However, she did now come up to town, her son having no doubt first done his best to mollify the royal lioness so far as that the meeting of the two cousins might be practicable and safe. What resulted is recorded by Sir Robert Sidney's secretary, Rowland White, in his gossiping dispatches to his patron; and his details give us a highly curious and characteristic specimen of the Maiden Queen. On the 14th of January, 1598, he writes;—"My Lady Leicester is now come to town, and many went to meet her." On the 15th of February he tells of her having been present the night before at "a very great supper," given in Essex House by Sir Gilly Merrick (Essex's steward), along with Lady Rich, her other daughter the Countess of Northumberland, the Earl and Countess of Essex, and others. "They had two plays," he says, "which kept them up till one o'clock after midnight." But she had not yet been suffered to behold the royal countenance. On Ash Wednesday, the 1st of March, White thus reports;—"I acquainted you with the care had to bring my Lady Leicester to the Queen's presence. It was often granted, and she brought to the Privy Galleries, but the Queen found some occasion not to come. Upon Shrove Monday the Queen was persuaded to go to Mr. Comptroller's [Sir William Knollys's], at the Tilt End, and there was my Lady Leicester, with a fair jewel of three hundred pounds. A great dinner was prepared by my Lady Chandos [wife of Sir William Knollys], the Queen's coach ready, and all the world expecting her Majesty's coming; when, upon a sudden, she resolved not to go, and so

sent word. My Lord of Essex, that had kept his chamber the day before, in his night-gown went up to the Queen the Privy way, but all would not prevail; and as yet my Lady Leicester hath not seen the Queen. It had been better not been moved, for my Lord of Essex, by importuning the Queen in these unpleasing matters, loses the opportunity he might take to do good unto his ancient friends." The next day, nevertheless, the conjunction was actually brought about. "My Lady Leicester," White writes again, on the 2nd of March, "was at Court, kissed the Queen's hand and her breast, and did embrace her, and the Queen kissed her. My Lord of Essex is in exceeding favour here. My joy is so great that I forget to answer your letters." But Elizabeth, having thus gone through her part, saw no reason why the thing should be carried farther. On the evening of Friday, the 10th, White informs Sidney that the Earl of Essex had an hour before left town for Grafton, in Northamptonshire, where he meant to overtake his mother that night late as it was. "She," adds White, "as you have understood, was graced by the Queen, and departed from Court exceedingly contented; but desirous again to come to kiss the Queen's hand, it was denied, and, as I heard, some wonted unkind words given out of her." * Whether Blount had accompanied his wife to town does not appear. The parliament had been dissolved on the 11th of February.

The next letters in the collection having dates are two from Blount; the first written from Drayton Bas-

* *Sidney Papers*, II. 81—95.

set on the 3rd of April, the second from Ildington on the 12th of May. Birch has printed the former, and given an abstract of the latter. They relate to a marriage which Essex had projected between the eldest son of his friend the Earl of Worcester and his cousin Lettice, whom Birch makes to have been the daughter of Sir William Knollys, but who, for anything that appears, may as well have been the daughter of any other of Lady Leicester's brothers, of whom there were four, besides Sir William, all married. Blount had been employed to arrange the affair both with Worcester and with the young lady's mother, and the letters show the confidential footing on which he stood at least with this one of his wife's sisters-in-law. He speaks of his "sister Knollys" as "near in her own nature;" "but," says he, "I doubt not but by your persuasions to my sister, and the reasons I shall use unto her, being made your minister, that she will be drawn to do that for her daughter which will satisfy the Earl, whom I find very willing to assure your friendship by this alliance, if he be not overmuch crossed by her nearness, whom I hope I have so infected with ambition by my late letters to her written, that the same will quell all other passions in her, as doth your love absolutely command the service of," &c. After all, Birch observes, the marriage never took place.

Two letters from the Countess follow, both dated in June. One is an unimportant note, requesting her son's "honourable favour and best assistance" to one Simon Digby. Mention is also made in it of "a young married couple." The other runs as follows:— "Sweet Robin,

We all acknowledge the great honours you have done us by your kind memory, seeing we could not enjoy the happiness of your presence, which would have made us all too proud. Yet have we presumed to wish you oft to grace this ill-favoured cottage, which, if you will put to but a little of your helping hand, we mean to make it better to serve your turn and ours, and for little Robin hereafter. Your spy can tell you of all our proceedings, and how much you are honoured in these parts, where if the adamants were that draw the first place of your love from me, I imagine it should go hard but we should see you oftener. But let me still hold a high seat in your noble thoughts, and I shall ever requite you with my dearest love, and always rest your most affectionate mother, L. LEICESTER. — My best Friend, and your faithfulest servant, recommends his humble duty to you." "Little Robin" is Essex's son, at this time a boy about six years old. Of the "adamants" the Countess may possibly have seen or heard a good deal during her late visit to the capital. She might congratulate herself, after all, that she had escaped out of her Majesty's hands better than one of them, poor Mrs. Bridges, had done not long before. "The Queen," White writes to Sidney, on the 13th of April of the preceding year, "hath of late used the fair Mrs. Bridges with words and blows of anger, and she, with Mrs. Russell, were put out of the Coffer Chamber. They lay three nights at my Lady Stafford's, but are now returned again to their wonted waiting. By what I writ in my last letter unto you by post, you may conjecture whence these storms rise. The cause of this displeasure *said* to

be their taking of physic, and one day going privately through the Privy Galleries to see the playing at ballon" [foot-ball].*

Another letter from the Countess, marked as received in July, has been printed by Birch. It had been written in reply to one from Essex, intimating some check or disgust that had made him leave the Court, probably his difference with Burghley about making peace with Spain, when the Lord Treasurer, after a hot altercation, handed him the Bible, and bid him read the 23rd verse of the fifty-fourth Psalm, *Blood-thirsty men shall not live out half their days.* His mother says :— "Sweet Robin, yourself hath given me such a taste of some strange matter to be looked for, as I cannot be quiet till I know the true cause of your absence and discontentment. If it be but for Ireland, I doubt not but you are wise and politic enough to countermine with your enemies, whose devilish practices can no way hurt you but one. Wherefore, my dear son, give me leave to be a little jealous over you for your good, and entreat you to have ever God and your own honour before your eyes; so shall you be sure that he will dispose indeed all, as you say, for the best, in despite of all enemies. My Friend and I cannot but be troubled with this news, and do wish ourselves with you, as we would soon be if we thought our service needful, or that you would have it so; which let us know, and we will leave all other occasions whatsoever, and will presently be with you. Well, if it be but men's matters, I know you have courage enough; if women's, you have nearly well passed the pikes

* *Sidney Papers*, II. 38.

already, and therein should be skilful. So, praying you not to be too secret from your best friends, I end, beseeching the Almighty to bless you ever in his highest favour, while I am your mother dearliest loving you, L. LEICESTER." An affectionate and withal a vivacious and hopeful nature speaks in this; a heart that may be cast down, but is not easily to be kept down. There is a dashing directness in the logic by which the old lady satisfies herself that her son must, after all, be a match for anything mortal, anything in the shape of either man or woman.

Although her Majesty had actually come to blows with Essex,—Camden tells us that, on his turning his back upon her in a kind of contempt, she gave him a box on the ear and bade him go and be hanged, upon which he clapt his hand upon his sword, swearing a great oath that he neither would nor could put up with such an affront, while the alarmed Lord Admiral rushed in between them,—he was soon restored to favour. Then he was gratified by obtaining the great object of his ambition, the Lord Lieutenancy of Ireland. To that country, destined to be fatal to his race, he repaired in the spring of 1599.* It appears that on the way to his place of embarkation, he visited his mother in Staffordshire, and there, probably, he was joined by Sir Christo-

* In *Shaw's Staffordshire*, (II. 6.) is given the followiug entry from the Parish Register of Tamworth ;—"1598, Mem. That the 30th day of this April Robert Earl of Essex went from Drayton Basset towards Ireland, with a host of men, to make war against the Earl of Tyrone, an Irishman." The year here is certainly wrong; so is the month, probably; if not the month, the day is. Essex was in Dublin by the middle of April. See *Birch*, II. 397.

pher Blount, who served in this expedition in the eminent place of Marshal of the Army. In a letter to Cecil, written from Stony Stratford, at seven o'clock on the morning of the 29th of March, we find Essex referring apparently to this appointment:—"For Sir Christopher Blount," he says, "I will, at Daventry, where I dine, make a dispatch to her Majesty. If she grant me not this favour, I am maimed of my right arm." * So Blount's commission was probably not yet made out.† In Ireland Essex soon found himself involved in the usual difficulties and impracticabilities. It must have been now that his anxious mother wrote to him as follows:—"My dear and most noble child, In the midst of your infinite troubles, I must needs satisfy mine own heart with sending you one farewell, with these caveats, that, as I would not, like myself or sex, persuade your invincible courage to cowardice, so yet, my sweet Robin, give me leave to put you in mind that the true valour in a great commander, thoroughly known, is as well shown, and to better purpose, in wise politic carriage and government, than it can possibly be in too much hazard and adventuring his own person. Wherefore, be wise as valiant, and think what a high price your country and friends hold you at, amongst the which I am not the least, that hold you dearest, nor may [any] rightlier challenge a careful respect of you to bring yourself safe again unto me, to my endless comfort;

* *Add. MS.* 4160.

† Yet we have Chamberlain writing on the 15th;—"Sir Christopher Blount is named Marshal of Ireland, though the Queen had a good meaning to Sir Henry Brounker."—*Add. MS.* 4175.

beseeching the Almighty even so to bless you with honour and all happy victories, that we may glorify and praise his holy name for your preservation, with my dear Friend, who, I hope, with your leave, shall henceforth cease from these thankless services; and so should you, if I had the like power over you, until you were drawn by interest and what conditions yourself would. The Lord of Heaven bless and keep you both, that with heart's joy I may see your faces again, with safe return; till which time and ever, in my dearest love, I remain your mother inestimably loving you, L. LEICESTER.—My sister Garret prays for you as for herself. Let me be made often happy with the news of your well-doing, and my Friend's."

There remains only the single letter from the Countess to her husband. It is without date, but was written at some time when Sir Christopher was with Essex in London. It is very short:—"This gentleman, as I understand from our good neighbour Mr. Bagot, hath a cause in the Star Chamber. He desireth to have favourable hearing according to justice, and therein to have my son's assistance if he be at the hearing thereof. Which, although he be a stranger, yet, for that he is our countryman, I pray you do what in reason you may for him. So, hoping to see you shortly, I commend you, as myself, to the Highest, resting ever your most faithful wife and best mistress, L. LEICESTER."

These letters, then, extend over a space of between three and four years—from the latter part of 1595 to the spring of 1599. Some time before the earliest of them

was written the Countess had lost her second son Walter, him whom Wotton calls "a diamond of the time;" he had been killed in 1591, in his twenty-second year, at the siege of Rouen, where Essex commanded a body of English troops sent by Elizabeth to the assistance of Henry IV. of France. In the paper called his "Apology," written some years afterwards, Essex makes affectionate mention of him as his dear and only brother, the half arch of his house. If, as has been reported, Walter was his father's favourite, Robert may from the first have been his mother's. Now, at any rate, he was become the idol of her heart. And another year was not to complete its circle before he of whom she was so proud should, in the flower of his age, have perished on the scaffold, before she should have been left desolate of both son and husband.

Essex met with no success in his Irish enterprise. The confusion rather grew worse confounded and more hopeless-looking every day. Things being in this state, he suddenly broke off, without leave granted or asked, and, to the surprise of all men, made his appearance at the English Court, in the end of September. His arrival at Nonsuch, where the Court then was, with what followed, is thus related by Rowland White:—

"Upon Michaelmas eve, about ten o'clock in the morning, my Lord of Essex lighted at Court Gate in post, and made all haste up to the presence, and so to the privy chamber, and stayed not till he came to the Queen's bed-chamber, where he found the Queen newly up, the hair about her face; he kneeled unto her,

kissed her hands, and had some private speech with her, which seemed to give him great contentment; for, coming from her Majesty to go shift himself in his chamber, he was very pleasant, and thanked God, though he had suffered much trouble and storms abroad, he found a sweet calm at home." White, who was then at Nonsuch, goes on to say, that it was much wondered at that the Earl should have gone so boldly to her Majesty's presence, "she not being ready, and he so full of dirt and mire, that his very face was full of it." Having washed and dressed himself, he returned to the Queen in about an hour, and sat with her till it was half-past twelve. "As yet," continues White, "all was well, and her usage very gracious towards him. He went to dinner, and during all that time discoursed merrily of his travels and journeys in Ireland, of the goodness of the country, the civilities of the nobility that are true subjects, of the great entertainment he had in their houses, of the good orders he found there. He was visited frankly by all sorts here of lords, and ladies, and gentlemen; only strangeness is observed between him and Mr. Secretary [Cecil], and that party." In the afternoon "he went up again to the Queen, but found her much changed in that small time; for she began to call him to question for his return, and was not satisfied in the manner of his coming away, and leaving all things at so great hazard." This was the last time Essex and his royal mistress ever met. On the same night, Saturday the 28th of September, between ten and eleven o'clock, her Majesty sent him her command that he should keep his chamber. On the following Monday

afternoon he was sent off to London, and committed to the custody of the Lord Keeper Egerton, in York House. "At his going from Court," writes White to Sir Robert Sidney, on the next day, "few or none of his friends accompanied him. I hear he takes all things very patient, and endures this affliction like a wise man. It seems that his offences towards her Majesty are great, seeing it is her will to have this done unto him. He is a most unfortunate man, to give so gracious a Queen cause to disfavour or disgrace him." On the Sunday night, White mentions in the same letter, Lady Essex had been delivered of a girl. Writing again on the 6th, he states that old Lady Walsingham had made humble suit to the Queen that she would be pleased to give the Earl leave to write to his lady, who, probably before her delivery, had been informed of his arrival, and was extremely troubled that she neither saw him nor heard from him; but her Majesty, in the first instance at least, had refused the indulgence, although the Earl was also said to be very ill. It was understood that she was extremely incensed. And not without some reason. The strange step the Earl had taken had already begun to produce the most alarming effects. "His Lordship's sudden return out of Ireland," White writes from London on the 3rd of October, "brings all sorts of knights, captains, officers, and soldiers away from thence; that this town is full of them, to the great discontentment of her Majesty, that they are suffered to leave their charge. But the most part of the gallants have quitted their commands, places, and companies, not willing to stay there after him; so that the disorder

seems to be greater there than stands with the safety of that service. *

Lady Rich, it would appear, was at this time in town, or came up on hearing of what had taken place; but after a few days she retired to the country, to avoid the numbers of persons that came to visit her, and whose resort to Essex House gave offence to the Court. Essex's other sister, now re-married to the Earl of Northumberland, came to town on the 15th; White had heard a report that some unkindness had arisen between her and her husband, upon which she had left him. On the 4th of November, he writes that Lady Essex was then going about from one to another of the persons in authority, to induce them to intercede with her Majesty, but receiving small comfort from any. She had not yet been suffered to see her husband. Leave, however, had by this time been granted to his two sisters to come to Court, and be suitors for him. On the 23rd, White writes:—"My Lady of Essex is a most sorrowful creature for her husband's captivity; she wears all black of the meanest price, and receives no comfort in any thing. She is most desirous to see her lord, but he is resolved, as they say, to see no creature but such as came from the Queen. Some or other told her of a warrant to send him to the Tower, which infinitely grieves her." In a subsequent letter he states that, on the afternoon of Sunday the 25th, she came to the Court all in black, her dress altogether not being of the value of five pounds, and called at the chamber of the Countess of Huntingdon, who did not come to her

* *Sidney Papers*, II. 130—132.

so that she was obliged to send in a message requesting that the Countess would be pleased to move her Majesty to give her leave to visit her husband, who she had heard had been the night before in very great extremity. "This was all she desired; and answer was returned, that she must attend her Majesty's pleasure by the Lords of her Council, and come no more to Court. It was ill taken that she presumed to come, having been denied it long since." A fortnight later matters were still nearly in the same state. On the 8th of December, after having stated that the Court had the day before removed from Whitehall to Richmond, and that Essex continued very ill, White adds:—"The two Ladies, Northumberland and Rich, all in black, were at Court before the remove; what success they had with her Majesty I do not know; they were humble suitors to have the Earl removed to a better air and to a more convenient place, for where he is he is somewhat straitly lodged, in respect my Lord Keeper's household is great. A hope there is that he shall be removed as soon as he is able, for he is exceeding feeble. My Lady Essex rises almost every day by daylight to go to my Lord Treasurer's and Sir John Fortescue; for to this Court she may not come." At last, on the 12th, she was permitted to go to the Earl, whom she found so weak that when he was taken out of his bed he could not sit up. "Little hope," says White, "there is of his recovery." On Saturday, the 22nd, he writes:—"Upon Wednesday it was said he was dead; the bell tolled for him. He was prayed for in London churches; divines watch with him, and in their pulpits pray for him; but it hath

pleased God to restore him to some little amendment. My Lady Rich was at Court upon Thursday; her Majesty spake with her, and used her very graciously. Her humble suit was to have leave to see her brother before he died; that it did concern her about the matters of her jointure. But I do not hear that she had leave to go; for the same suit my Lady Northumberland makes. My Lady of Essex is with him every day, from morning to night, and then returns to Walsingham House. Mr. Comptroller [his uncle, Sir William Knollys] had leave to go see him. His friends do very much fear he cannot live out this month."*

The Queen, meanwhile, persisted in thinking the Earl's illness to be all a piece of acting. On the 28th, we find White recording that her Majesty had graced the dancing and plays at Court with her presence, and had played at cards, at primero, with the Lord Treasurer, Mr. Secretary, and the Lord North. "The Court," he adds, "was great, and full of Lords and Ladies, and her Majesty came to chapel." About two months before he had mentioned that the only person at Court who was noted to stand firm to Essex, was my Lady Scroope; and she endured much on that account at her Majesty's hands. "She wears all black; she mourns, and is pensive, and joys in nothing but in a solitary being alone."† On the 5th of January, 1600, White writes:—"Her Majesty is in very good health, and comes much abroad these holidays; for almost every night she is in the presence, to see the ladies dance the old and new country dances with the tabor

* *Sidney Papers*, II. 139—153. † *Sidney Papers*, II. 132.

and pipe. Here was an exceeding rich New Year's gift presented, which came, as it were, in a cloud, no man knows how; which is neither received nor rejected, and is in the hands of Mr. Comptroller. It comes from the poor Earl, the downfall of fortune, as it is thought. His Lady comes every morning unto him by seven, and stays till six; which is said to be the full time limited for her abode there. The ladies his sisters, my Lady Walsingham, nor his son, have no liberty to go see him as yet. Many ministers, that made public prayers for him in their churches, are commanded to silence." By this time, however, the Earl was so far recovered as to be able to sit up and eat at a table.*

A week later it is stated that the Earl continued to mend, but that his New Year's gift was not yet accepted, and that the Queen was still very angry. "The Lady Rich earnestly follows her desire to have leave to go see him; she writes to her Majesty many letters, sends many jewels, many presents. Her letters are read, her presents received, but no leave granted." Now, too, we learn that the unfortunate nobleman's mother, although she still remained in the country, had been doing her best, as well as his wife and his sisters, in the way which was thought likely to be most effectual. "The Lady Leicester sent the Queen a New Year's gift, which was very well taken." And on the 24th, after having mentioned that his Lordship was now quite recovered, but that his sisters could prevail nothing at Court, White adds that now his mother was arrived in town, "come up of purpose to be a petitioner for her son's liberty."

* *Sidney Papers*, II. 154—156.

On Saturday, the 26th, he had heard that Lady Leicester was that day gone towards the Court to see if her Majesty would be pleased to permit the removal of the Earl to a better air. "Upon Thursday last," he writes again on Saturday the 9th of February, "my Lady his wife was commanded to forbear coming unto him any more till her Majesty's further pleasure were known, which was to her an exceeding grief; she wept pitifully. The Earl hath recovered his health, and, I hear, walks in the garden at York House in a cloth gown, cloth jerkin, cloth hose, cloth stockings, cloth mittens." On the 14th, however, it is noted that his lady has again been allowed access to him, only with some reduction of the time her visit may last; "for now she comes but at nine in the morning, and stays till four in the afternoon." *

These minute details, inscribed as it were by the passing events and changing circumstances themselves, set the life and reality of things before us in a way that no translation of them into the heroics of history could match. They give us the very "form and pressure" of the time. On the one side, the iron Queen, with all the woman quenched in her, or at least quieted for the present, by the roused spirit of the despot, resolute to make her power be felt if her heart should break in the struggle, risking everything for that, keeping her ears shut in obstinate incredulity and scorn not only to every petition for mercy, but against even the reports brought to her of the Earl's illness and danger, as if it were manifestly impossible that any real or irremediable

* *Sidney Papers*, 158—167.

evil could follow from so proper and necessary a course as she was pursuing, or as if she defied death and fate to move or turn her, while the whole Court, men and women, maids of honour, and ministers of state, look on in silent dread or acquiescence, their very souls subdued within them by that strange superstition of loyalty, then universal, now so utterly gone; on the other side, the female relations of the unfortunate nobleman, his mother, his two sisters, and his wife, being almost the only persons of their class who can venture openly to show a strong interest about him, anxious and perplexed, not knowing what to think as to how it may all end, now cheered with a gleam of hope, now again heavy with apprehension or doubt, all the while restlessly and impatiently plying every various expedient that promises a chance of softening the royal pride and inflexibility, but trusting more in presents than in prayers to make the desired impression on her Majesty's peculiarly constructed mind;—all this is made visible to us almost as if it were going on before our eyes, daguerreotyped as we have it in these contemporaneous letters.

By this time the Earl had written a very penitential letter to her Majesty, from the effect of which much was expected. On the 21st of February, White describes him as, though still confined in the Lord Keeper's house, very well and merry, and his wife and his followers as "now in some heart again;" "but my Lady Rich," he adds, "is sick, sickly discontented." It was not altogether hope deferred that made her Ladyship sick; she had incurred the royal displeasure, and perhaps done,

inadvertently, serious mischief. On Monday, the 25th, he writes again:—"The Earl of Essex is little spoken of at Court, only a mislike is taken that my Lady his mother, the Earl of Southampton, and many other of his friends, have been in a house that looks into York Garden, where he uses to walk, and have saluted each other out of a window. My Lady Rich is commanded to keep her house, the cause thought to be that by her means certain copies of a letter she writ to the Queen is published abroad. She denies it; it rests upon proofs." That is, she denied having communicated the letter to any one, not that she had written it.

Our concern at present, however, is not with Lady Rich, but with her mother. White goes on to say, under the same date, that my Lady Leicester had now a gown in hand that she intended to send to the Queen, which would cost her a hundred pounds at the least. And the gown, it appears, was very nearly ready; for on Monday, the 3rd of March, he writes:—"Yesterday, the Countess of Leicester sent the Queen a most curious fine gown, which was presented by my Lady Scudamore. Her Majesty liked it well, but did not accept it, nor refuse it; only answered, that, things standing as they did, it was not fit for her to desire what she did; which was, to come to her Majesty's presence to kiss her hands, upon her now going to her poor home." The Countess in these circumstances did not leave town at present. On the last day of the same week we have White commencing his chronicle thus:—"There was an expectation all this week that my Lord of Essex should have come to his own house, but why or how

it was stayed is not spoken of. This is conjectured, that the great Ladies, Leicester, Southampton, Northumberland, and Rich, assembled themselves at Essex House to receive him, which hindered it at that time." On the Saturday of the week following he informs Sidney, that, by her Majesty's express command, my Lady Leicester, Lord and Lady Southampton, Mr. Greville, and Mr. Bacon had been all removed from Essex House, and that my Lord of Essex was looked for there, to remain with two keepers. None were to come to speak with him but by her Majesty's leave; and whether his lady was to be allowed to remain with him, or even to continue to visit him during the daytime, was not yet known. In a subsequent letter it is stated that Essex had been transferred to his own house upon Maunday Thursday, about eight o'clock at night. Sir Richard Berkley only had been appointed his keeper; he lay in the next chamber to the Earl, and had all the keys of the house in his custody, while his servant acted as porter. Lady Essex came to her husband only during the day; and all persons were removed out of the house, except such as were required to attend him for his diet and chamber. At last, on the 29th, it is mentioned that Lady Leicester had that week been permitted to see her son. She probably returned to the country immediately after this. Lady Rich had already gone to Lees, in Essex, her husband's seat.*

The following notices from White's subsequent letters give us the remainder of the history of Essex's confine-

* *Sidney Papers*, II. 171—182.

ment. 12th April:—"My Lord of Essex hath a little more liberty in his own house; for Sir Richard Berkley lies underneath him, but the gates are kept very close, and nobody hath access unto him. My Lady his wife is an humble suitor to her Majesty by the Lords, that she will be pleased to let her live in the house with her husband, because my Lady Walsingham, her mother, is going to Barn-Elms.* He often walks upon his open leads and in his garden with his wife; now he, now she, reading one to the other." 26th April:—"My Lord of Essex hath leave to celebrate the feast [of St. George] by himself at his own house. His lady hath yet no leave to live with him for altogether." 3rd May:—"My Lady Essex came this afternoon of purpose from Essex House to Baynard's Castle, to see my Lady [Sidney's wife] and her children. To see her clad as she was, was a pitiful spectacle. Her lord continues as he did, very private, and she is an humble suitor to the Queen, by the Lords' means, that she may live with him, and his keeper removed. It is not yet granted, and a poor hope that it may be obtained." 10th May:—"My Lord of Essex continues where he did, and in the same manner; he plays now and then at tennis, and walks upon his leads and garden. My Lady is gone to Barn-Elms, with her mother, and doth not take a lodging near Essex House, as she purposed, lest her Majesty might take offence at it." On the 5th of June he was brought up at York House, before certain

* The manor-house of Barn-Elms, in Surrey, had been given to Secretary Walsingham by the Queen, and it was his frequent residence in the last years of his life.

Peers and Ministers of State commissioned to hear his cause; by whom, after a discussion which lasted from nine in the morning till eight at night, during part of which time he was kept kneeling at the end of the table at which the Commissioners sat, at first even without a cushion, it was concluded that he should return to the place whence he came till her Majesty's further pleasure should be known. "I hear," says White, "it was a most pitiful and lamentable sight, to see him, that was the minion of fortune, now unworthy of the least honour he had of many [that is, of the least of the many honours he had]; many that were present burst out in tears at his fall to such misery." 5th July:—"My Lord of Essex's keeper is taken from him; but he is sick of an ague, and admits nobody to his presence, but lives as retired as he did before. My Lady comes to him as she was wont, but at night goes away; and many of his friends were desirous to see him, but he desires them to forbear him." 12th July:—"My Lord of Essex . . . makes humble suit to remove either to Grafton or to Greys [in Oxfordshire], Mr. Comptroller's house. I hear likewise that my Lady Rich is not at liberty to go where she will, but now makes suit she may." 19th July:—"My Lord of Essex . . . admits few unto him; and I hear hath dismissed Sir Gilly Merrick and Sir Harry Linley, by commandment. . . . My Lady of Essex lies at Battersea, at Sir Oliver St. John's house, because the measles are at Barn-Elms." 27th July:—"Her Majesty's displeasure continues towards the Earl of Essex; and my Lady Rich, I hear, is appointed to be before the Lords. And the

scholar that writ *Harry the Fourth** is committed to the Tower. My Lady Northumberland is become a great courtier, and very graciously used by her Majesty, and is often with her." 23rd August:—"My Lord of Essex writes now and then to the Queen. . . . There is great hope he shall have liberty to go to the country at his pleasure; but his return to the Court, or her Majesty's presence, is very doubtful." Three days after this, on the afternoon of the 26th, Essex at last obtained his liberty.†

But he had not, after his eleven months' imprisonment, been at large for more than half that space, when the infatuated man threw himself into the mouth of open-jawed destruction by the most frantic attempt recorded in history. It was on the morning of Sunday, the 8th of February, 1601, that he rushed out of Essex House, sword in hand, at the head of some hundreds of armed partisans, with the purpose of getting the City of London to support him in an immediate attack upon the Queen's palace. As he dashed along through Fleet Street, calling upon the people to take up arms, for that a plot was laid for his life, and shouting out "For the Queen! For the Queen!" the wondering citizens, Stow relates, "thought that the Queen and he were made friends, and that her Majesty had appointed him to ride in that triumphant manner through London." The wild affair ended at ten o'clock on that winter night, by the Earl and all his friends who were with him in Essex House surrendering themselves,

* Dr. (afterwards Sir John) Hayward.

† *Sidney Papers*, II. 187—213.

without any attempt at resistance, and without farther stipulation than that they should be honourably treated in prison and have a fair trial. Several lives had been lost on both sides in a sharp encounter in the early part of the day, between the insurgents endeavouring to make their way back from the City, and a company of pikemen and musketeers whom Bancroft the Bishop of London had posted to bar their passage at the west end of St. Paul's Churchyard; and an incident that Camden mentions is worth notice, as furnishing a curious confirmation of one particular in the story which makes Leicester's death to have been the contrivance of his Countess and the man she soon after married. Blount was Essex's right-hand man throughout this business, and, when they were opposed by the soldiers drawn up on the top of Ludgate-Hill, the Earl ordered Sir Christopher to fight his way through, "which," says Camden, "he performed with great resolution, and fell briskly upon Waite, a person that Leicester, Blount's rival, had formerly sent into Holland to murder him. Waite was slain, and Blount himself wounded and taken prisoner."* This proves that the story recovered from oblivion by Dr. Bliss was, in part at least, the common report of the time. And the historian, it will be observed, speaks of Leicester's having employed this Waite to assassinate Blount as a fact about which there was no doubt.

Essex and his friend the Earl of Southampton were conveyed in the first instance to the Archbishop's Palace at Lambeth; "they were not sent directly to the

* *Elizabeth*, 632.

Tower," Camden relates, "because the night was dark, and there was no passing through the bridge." They were, however, removed thither either that same night or early on the following morning. There they lay till they were brought to take their trial together for high treason in Westminster Hall, before the Lord High Steward, twenty-five Peers, and eight of the Judges, on Thursday, the 19th of February. Having been found guilty, they were that evening conducted back to the Tower, the grim inclosure of which Essex never again crossed. He was beheaded, on a scaffold erected within the court of the fortress, on the morning of Ash-Wednesday, the 25th of February. He had only attained the age of thirty-three years and three months.

No friend or relation had been permitted to visit him while he lay in the Tower. Neither mother, nor sister, nor wife, nor child ever looked upon him again after his surrender. On that fatal Sunday, his Countess and Lady Rich were both in Essex House; when the Earl had returned from the City, which, after being driven back at St. Paul's, he did by the river, discomfited and a fugitive, and the horse and foot posted around the house by the government made resistance or escape equally hopeless, the shrieks and lamentations of the two ladies and their waiting gentlewomen, Camden tells us, filled the place. The Lord Admiral then offered to permit them to pass out. "This," the historian continues, "Essex took as a favour, and only desired an hour or two's time to strengthen the place they were to pass by, which was likewise granted." Before the time was expired, Essex, in a fury of desperation, took up the

notion of fighting his way out; but this was only for a moment. The ladies seem to have been removed for some time before the negotiation terminated by Essex and his friends all falling on their knees before the Admiral and delivering up their swords.

For the Earl's mother, the old Countess, our heroine Lettice Knollys, who had gone through so much, here was at last a tempest of sudden sorrow under which she must have bent low to the ground,—a shock as of an earthquake, a rushing down of the very heavens upon her head. In that lonely country house of hers, if, as is probable, she remained there throughout those wretched weeks, the march of the remorseless tragedy, that was to deprive her of both son and husband, would be watched with maddening interest—would sound at every step through and through the heart and the brain. From the first accounts that came of the insane outbreak, and its easy and complete suppression, she could hardly have a hope left. That one day carried the faces of all the other days in its own. That startling intelligence was a flash of lightning which, piercing for a moment the night of the future, revealed all that was to follow. That opening of the drama, bursting upon the overwhelmed and struggling vision, showed the bloody catastrophe already rushing on. But, rapidly as the end of all approached, rapidly and neither to be arrested nor retarded, how many new agonies were to be borne, each sharper than the last, before all should be over!

Some possibility there might have seemed of Essex having his forfeited life flung back to him after all,

until his head actually rolled on the scaffold. For Blount, from that time, escape was out of the question; he was, beyond redemption, a dead man. While Essex was undergoing his trial and his doom, his step-father lay ill of his wound; but he was sufficiently restored, though still weak, to be brought up and arraigned, along with four of his associates, before a Special Commission of Oyer and Terminer, in Westminster Hall, on the 5th of March. His guilt, indeed, had been sufficiently established before this. But some additional biographical particulars of the man remain to be collected from the records of these last scenes of his life.

All the prisoners, as was their customary, had been privately examined soon after their apprehension. Blount, whom Bacon, in his "Declaration of the Treasons of Essex," calls the Earl's "inwardest counsellor," had made two confessions, as they were styled. * From the first, emitted on the 18th of February, it would appear that he had come up to town on the Earl's invitation only a few days before the attempted insurrection. He stated that, about the 20th of January, Essex had sent a person to visit his wife, the Countess of Leicester, with letters of compliment, "and to require him to come up unto him to London, to settle his estate according as he had written unto him before some few days." Blount, whether privy or no to the Earl's designs, had immediately obeyed this summons. Both in these private examinations and on his public trial, when posed with

* First published in full, along with those of the other prisoners, in Mr. Jardine's *Criminal Trials*, Vol. I., London, 1832.

questions or reasonings about the lawfulness of the Earl's proceedings, he affected great ignorance in regard to such matters. In this first confession, he said that he was not read in stories of former times, but he did not know but that in former times subjects had used force for their mediation with the crown. The only two things in which he professed to take much interest were fighting and religion. He was a soldier, and a devoted son of the Church of Rome. The latter circumstance was eagerly taken advantage of, and made to tell with considerable effect both against himself and Essex. On his first private examination, being asked upon his conscience, "whether the Earl of Essex did not give him comfort, that, if he came to authority, there should be a toleration of religion," he confessed that "he should have been to blame to have denied it; for in the Earl's usual talk he was wont to say, that he liked not that any man should be troubled for his religion." Essex had, in fact, been accustomed by this kind of liberalism to court both the Roman Catholics and the Puritans. Serjeant Yelverton, in his opening speech at the Earl's trial, charged him with having entertained none but Papists, recusants, and atheists for his abettors in his capital rebellion against the whole estate of England. "Whereas we are charged to have dealt with Papists," said Essex in his reply, "I do assure your Lordships, that it is most true that Papists have been hired and suborned to witness against me, by means of one Udall, a seminary priest, who have counterfeited letters in my name to send into Ireland to Sir Christopher Blount, whom they thought to be inward with me, thereby to

touch my honour and reputation."* But it was strongly suspected that this and other things of the same kind had been done by Essex's own contrivance or with his knowledge, in order that the forged letters might be used to discredit or perplex any evidence derived from his own hand-writing that might be brought against him. Afterwards when the Attorney-General, Coke, asked him what he could say in regard to Sir John Davis, one of his adherents, who had confessed that he was a Papist and a Catholic, and that he had been drawn into that religion by Blount, and who, immediately upon his commitment, had called for a seminary priest to absolve him, Essex answered, that, if Davis were such a man, he had been entirely deceived in him; he could only say, that he had observed him to have regularly attended at prayer and the service of God in his house. "And as for Blount," he continued, "God is my witness, I have been so far from favouring his Popish religion, and have so earnestly dealt with him to reform him, that he hath often told me I have been too passionate."† When the same charge was again pressed with another inference,—the Counsel for the Crown making it an evidence of the Earl's hypocrisy, that, "having in his house continual preaching, he yet was content to have Sir Christopher Blount, a notorious Papist, in his house, and to promise toleration of religion;"—he repeated what he had before said, with an explanation of Blount's use of the term *passionate*, as meaning "too passionate against those of his profession."‡ Camden, who was present, and who makes Coke to have been the person who thus

* *Jardine*, I. 328. † *Id.* I. 338. ‡ *Id.* I. 355.

accused the Earl of having acted under a disguise, says that Essex in his reply owned that he knew Blount to be a Papist, "because he was educated under Allen, who was afterwards a Cardinal."* This is the passage to which reference has been made in a former page. Camden, whom Anthony Wood repeats, says, that, on his trial along with Blount, Davis admitted that he had been instructed in the principles of the Romish faith by his tutor at Oxford, and confirmed in it by Blount when they served together in the Irish wars; not, however, through Blount's persuasions, but "by the lustre and integrity of his life and conversation;" or, as Wood puts it, "by the example of his Christian and religious life."† This Davis, who received a pardon, was an eminent mathematician. At his trial he confessed himself guilty of all, and submitted himself wholly to the Queen's mercy. He had been the principal person appointed by the Earl to guard the Lord Keeper and the other Privy Councillors who were kept prisoners at Essex House on the day of the insurrection. He urged in mitigation of his fault that, the better to assure the Lords that no harm was meant them, he had gone up to the ladies, and entreated the Countess of Essex to come down and be amongst them, and, when she hesitated, saying, "With what comfort can I go amongst them?" he did not desist till he had persuaded her to come. When she made her appearance in the room he heard them say to her, "What a strange course is this the Earl of Essex taketh!" Davis, moreover, reminded the Lord Chief Justice that he had had a dinner set

* *Elizabeth*, 635. † *Athen. Oxon.*, II. 375.—*Elizabeth*, 638.

before them of such provisions as the house afforded. 'But my Lord Keeper and I told you," rejoined his Lordship from the bench, "we would eat none of my Lord's meat." *

If Essex's attempt had succeeded, or had not been put down, as it was, before it came to anything, Blount was, in the attack upon the Court, to have put himself in the front of the battle by taking his post at the outer gate. If we may trust one account, he himself admitted in his second confession that "the Earl, five days before his going into London, wrote down with his own hand certain articles to be disputed upon; whereof one was, whether they should take the Tower, another touching the surprising of the Court; and that the Earl usually spoke of his purpose to alter the government of the realm." † But what left Blount not a chance, if he can be supposed even to have had any, was the revelation of everything that had been got out of Essex before his death. To the divines who were first sent to him on the morning after his trial, he persisted in denying that he had done anything to offend God. He pretended to think that he had been justified in acting as he did by the authority of his place of Earl Marshal. But he was on the same day converted to another temper by his own chaplain Mr. Abdy Ashton, who, as he expressed it, had ploughed up his heart, and brought him down and humbled him. Ashton is described by the anonymous writer of a letter to Anthony Bacon, dated in this same year, which Hearne has printed in his

* *State Trials*, I. 1429. † *Id.* 1423.

edition of Camden's History, as a man base, fearful, and mercenary, but one who, by a formal show of zeal, had gotten the good opinion of the Earl, who, being himself most religious, was apt to be easily deceived in that way. The effect of his exhortations, at any rate, was, that the Earl, on that same Friday the 20th of February, made entreaty to the Constable of the Tower that he would move her Majesty to send to him the Lord Keeper, Lord Treasurer, Lord Admiral, and Secretary Cecil, that he might now discharge his conscience. On the following day, accordingly, they all came to him, when, as what took place is related by Cecil in a letter to Mr. (afterwards Sir Ralph) Winwood, after he had with great penitency expressed his sorrow for his obstinate denials of his guilt at the bar, and had especially asked Cecil's forgiveness for a groundless charge which he had made against him in the course of his defence, he first made a full confession verbally on the instant, and subsequently wrote down the whole, which filled four sheets of paper. He was as liberal in his accusations of his associates as of himself, charging Blount in particular as one who intended the destruction of his country. Another person of whom he expressed himself in similar terms was his secretary Cuff, who, as well as Blount, had yet to take his trial, and was now lying in the Tower. Cuff being brought to him, the Earl desired him to call on God and the Queen for mercy; "for," said he "you have been one of the chiefest instigators of me to all these my disloyal courses into which I have fallen." Cuff only replied that he lamented to see his

Lordship's want of firmness, and that he should thus betray his friends, whose devotion had been so unbounded. Essex, we are told, nevertheless, went on, mentioning various other persons in Scotland, France, and the Low Countries, as well as in England and Ireland, who had been privy to his design.* Two other divines were afterwards sent to him, one of whom, Dr. Barlow, published an account of the conferences they had with him, in which he says they found him more open to reveal than it became them to inquire. When some surprise was expressed that, thus conscious of guilt, he should have been so confident on his trial, and it was remarked that his demeanour then had offended many of his friends, he answered, "Yea; but now I am become another man;" and he took credit to himself for having, although at the last moment, fully discovered the conduct of many persons who had been previously suspected, holding it, he said, to be his duty to God and the realm so to clear his conscience. He

* *Winwood's Memorials*, I. 300. This account given by Cecil, differs in some particulars from that contained in a letter from Nottingham, the Lord Admiral, to Montjoy, dated the 31st of May, which Mr. Brewer has printed along with Bishop Goodman's *History of his Own Times*, 2 vols. 8vo. Oxford, 1839. (Vol. II. p. 14—18.) Nottingham makes the interview of the lords with Essex to have taken place, not on the Saturday, but on the Friday; and he seems to speak of the day as having been the first after the trial. A discrepancy more difficult to be accounted for is, that according to Nottingham, it was only himself and Cecil by whom Essex was visited. The Earl, he says, had particularly named him, Nottingham, as one of the councillors whom he humbly desired that her majesty would send to him. In Nottingham's account, also, Ashton, the clergyman, is made to have been present. Perhaps there were two interviews; one on the Friday with Nottingham and Cecil, another on the Saturday with the Lord Keeper and the Lord Treasurer.

continued in the same frame of mind to the end. From the scaffold he denounced his late attempt with all the vehemence of language that he could command, calling it a great, bloody, crying, infectious sin, and beseeching forgiveness for himself, and all who were engaged along with him, from God, from her Majesty, from the State, and from her Majesty's Ministers. He is not recorded to have, in any of these dying conversations or discourses, ever so much as mentioned either his mother, his sisters, his wife, or his children.

Camden relates that as soon as Blount, at his trial, heard Essex's confession read, and was shown the Earl's own signature attached to it, "he seemed very much startled at it, and desired to be allowed the liberty of a conference upon that matter with the Lord Admiral and Cecil in another place." "He then," it is added, "fetched a deep sigh, and, with his eyes lifted up, used this expression, 'Thou, O God, knowest from what designs I endeavoured to dissuade the Earl.'"* One of the accounts in the *State Trials* is to the same effect, with the addition that Blount did that same night make certain communications to the Admiral and Cecil, being brought into the Court of Wards to them after judgment was given. Throughout the rest of his trial he was quite crest-fallen, and scarcely denied any thing they charged him with. Towards the commencement of the proceedings, when Coke was belabouring him with his ponderous invective, he had called out for at least the mercy of quick dispatch, on the ground "that he was

* *Elizabeth*, 628.

now a man, what through weakness of his hurt and through grief of his action, not himself, scarce *compos mentis*." He now besought the Court to remember what strong natural considerations tied him to Essex, whose mother he had married. To how many adventures the obligations of his love to that Earl had before carried him, the world, he said, knew; and then turning to Cecil he went on;—"How liberal, prodigal, and adventurous I was of this life of mine, while it was my own, good Mr. Secretary, please to remember and report truly to the Queen. . . . I adventured my life many times, as the marks of this my wretched carcase will show; hazarded my fortune when it was at the best; and all for the honour of her Majesty and in her service; and yet she never vouchsafed notice of me or my service." This, he confessed, had heretofore given him no little discontentment; but it never had had the power to raise in him an ill thought against her Majesty. In conclusion, he said;—"To stay any fury going upon me, I here confess myself guilty of all that can be said against me, and most worthy to have deserved death; wherefore, renouncing all justification or extenuation of my offence, I wholly cast myself at her Majesty's mercy."* After the verdict of Guilty was brought in by the Jury, he spoke again on the Chief Justice demanding of the prisoners what they had to say for themselves why judgment should not be given against them. Of any intention of evil against her Majesty's person, he said, his thoughts could not accuse him. "My deserved fate," he repeated, "I must needs impute

* *State Trials*, I. 1437.

to my over-much love to that unhappy Earl. How I have followed him, how I have loved him, as being bewitched with too good an opinion of him, I now with grief feel it!" He again besought the Lord Admiral and Cecil to remind her Majesty of the sacrifices he had made and the perils he had encountered in her service. "This carcase of mine," he said, "when it shall be dissolved, will show the marks, such was my readiness in all actions to the honour of her Majesty; as when my fortune was at the best, so good as that I enjoyed £2000 a-year at the least, beside other wealth, by an honourable lady whom you all know I married, yet, when no commands enforced me, for her Majesty never commanded my going with the Earl in any journey, yet voluntarily I left all to adventure with the Earl in service for her Majesty into Portugal; at Cales [Cadiz], the Islands, and in Ireland I was with him". If her Majesty would grant him his life, he did not doubt that, as he had done, so he might do again. But if it was resolved that, as he had deserved, die he must, it was not life he cared for. Only, he added, "since the Earl that gone is, whose undue course hath brought us to this due punishment, hath left a blot upon me, and so far touched me in reputation and credit as if I had been plotter and procurer of him to more dangerous practices than these, I must needs clear myself, that neither in foreign practices, which I count confederacies with Spain, nor in domestical dealings, which I count that with Scotland, I have ever had to do so far as to allow or advise any thing to the hurt of this State."* Blount

* *State Trials*, I. 1447.

evidently felt quite secure that not a whisper would escape the government in reference to one secret passage of his history, whatever ground he might have had for that confidence. The figure he made in the dispatches of the Welshman Morgan, he knew well, was now, as it had been for the fourteen or fifteen years that had since elapsed, as much the secret of the Queen and her ministers as it was his own. Possibly, in his private conference with Cecil and the Lord Admiral, after he had received his sentence, in the Court of Wards, that matter might not be altogether passed over.

Of the five condemned criminals, Davis, as has already been mentioned, having been pardoned, Merrick and Cuff were hanged at Tyburn, on the 13th of March; Blount and Sir Charles Danvers, or Davers, were beheaded on Tower Hill, on the 18th. Blount had, at his trial, petitioned the Lord Admiral and Cecil to request of the Queen that he might be so far favoured as to be allowed to suffer in this latter mode, in respect that he had always professed arms, and had in the late Irish war held the honourable place of Marshal of the Field, as well as, according to another account, on the ground of his being of noble descent. He delivered a speech of some length from the scaffold. The first time, he declared, that he had ever known of any dangerous discontentment in my Lord of Essex was about three years before, at Wanstead, upon his coming one day from Greenwich. On that occasion, however, although he spoke many things, it was all in a general way, without descending into particulars. "After which time," continued Blount, "he never brake with me any matter

tending to the alteration of the State; I protest before God, until he came into Ireland, other than I might conceive that he was of an ambitious and discontented mind." But, in Ireland, when Blount lay at the Castle of Reban, severely wounded and dangerously ill, the Earl came to him, and then began to acquaint him with his intentions; and soon after that, when he was removed to Dublin Castle, Essex and Southampton came to visit him together, when the former told him plainly that he intended to carry over a part of his army to England, landing it at Milford or thereabouts, by which means he expected to gather such a further force as should enable him to march upon London. Blount answered that he would consider of the matter; and, when the two Earls came again to him next day, he told them he did not like Essex's project, but advised him rather to go over with only such a good train, or personal attendance, as might be sufficient to make him master of the Court. "And, although it be true," Blount proceeded, "that (as we all protested at our examinations and arraignments) we never resolved of doing hurt to her Majesty's person, for in none of our consultations was there set down any such purpose, yet I know, and must confess, if we had failed of our ends, we should, rather than have been disappointed, even have drawn blood from herself. From henceforward he dealt no more with me herein, until he was discharged of his keeper at Essex House. And then he again asked my advice, and disputed the matter with me; but resolved not. I went then into the country, and before he sent for me (which was some ten days before his rebellion)

I never heard more of the matter. And then he wrote unto me to come up, upon pretence of making some assurances of land, and the like." Blount then acknowledged that he most worthily deserved death, which he declared he also most willingly embraced, hoping that God would have mercy and compassion on him, although he had offended him as many ways as ever sinful wretch did. "I have led," he said, "a life so far from his precepts, as no sinner more. God forgive it me, and forgive me my wicked thoughts, my licentious life, and this right arm of mine, which, I fear me, hath drawn blood in this last action." Finally, he declared that he died a Catholic; and, when, as he turned towards the executioner, the Protestant clergyman offered to speak with him, he came back to the rail, and besought that his conscience might not be troubled. "Whereupon," the account concludes, "commandment was given that the minister should not interrupt him any further. After which he prepared himself to the block, and so died very manfully and resolutely." *

There is little more to be told of Blount. The Countess his wife would at least be no sufferer in her worldly circumstances by the loss of such a husband. The eleven years and a half of their union had been, by all appearances, a long struggle with pecuniary difficulties. The Countess had been left, as we have seen, by Leicester with very little money in hand; and in those days the raising of money upon real property for any sudden emergency was a much more formidable operation even than it is now. In June, 1590, we find

* *State Trials*, I. 1416.

Cartwright, the great Puritan Divine, whom Leicester had made Master of his Hospital at Warwick, making complaint to Burghley, that the Hospital "cannot obtain of the Countess of Leicester any whit of the legacy of two hundred pounds, which the Earl of Leicester devised by will in the name of a stock unto it." * The Countess's jewels were Blount's resource upon many occasions. She had been, or had had the reputation of being, rich in that kind of wealth. Among the Harleian Manuscripts is the following curious account, entitled "A remembrance to show how my Lady hath been rid of her jewels," which may have been drawn up either shortly after the Countess became for the third time a widow, or, perhaps, on some inquisition being made into the state of Blount's affairs, after his condemnation and while he still lived:—"The first year Sir Christopher Blount was married he sold many great jewels, and hath continued the same course almost every year since. Three years past was sold unto the Earl of Essex a great chain of pearl, a fair table diamond, and a pointed ruby, for the which Sir Christopher Blount received £3,000. The Countess of Northumberland bought two fair pendant pearl. At my Lady's last being at London was sold two fair collars, and other jewels of pearls and stones. Her Majesty had two fair pearls and a jewel of opals made fast to the seals of a letter. At Sir Christopher Blount his last unhappy coming to London he brought a clock of diamonds, a great table diamond, and one other fair jewel of diamonds, the best my Lady

* *Strype's Annals*, IV. 43.

had left her. How he bestowed them God knoweth. My Lady hath given heretofore, at several times, divers jewels for offices of kindness done for her by reason of her many troubles. It is well known my Lady hath paid of my Lord of Leicester's debts at the least £50,000. All these considered, my Lady's store of jewels must needs be small." * In "A Note what Legacies were given by my Lord of Leicester, and delivered by my Lady, being executrix," which accompanies this account, it is further stated that to "the chain of great pearl of £1,200 price," bequeathed by Leicester to her Majesty, my Lady had, in delivering it to the hands of the Lord Chancellor Hatton, added a jewel from herself.

But Blount had not confined himself to selling his wife's jewels. The account of the disposal of the jewels is followed by another headed "Lands and Leases; a Note of what Sir Christopher Blount sold out of my Lady of Leicester's living." It runs thus:—"Item, a Lease in Kent, for the which he received either eight or ten thousand pound. A lease for fifty years of Grafton pastures, worth £400 yearly above the rent. The Lordship of Berrington, wherein she had an estate for term of life better worth than £300 a-year. The inheritance of Wanstead, better worth than £300 a-year. Divers other things, also, parcel of her jointure by the old Earl of Essex, hath he chopt and changed away, so as her estate of living is far worse than it hath been." Complaint is further made that her ladyship's jointure from my Lord of Leicester was extended (that is, that a writ

* *Harleian MS.* 304, as printed in *Nichols's Leicestershire*, Vol. I. Part II., p. 538.

of extent had been taken out against it by the Crown), and that she was compelled to pay out of it £300 yearly to her Majesty; which is contended to have been contrary to equity, the heir (the Earl's illegitimate son) having land of inheritance sufficient to discharge the debt.

Her third marriage, so precipitately gone into, had therefore turned out upon the whole a bad business for the poor Countess. She cannot be pronounced, indeed, to have been fortunate in any of her three matrimonial adventures; but the first and second had conferred at least some outward distinction, had made her great, if not happy; the third had brought her no compensation of any kind, nothing but loss both of reputation and of estate, in addition to the flood of misery in which it had ended by plunging her. Whatever she may have felt it prudent or becoming to profess after having sacrificed so much to become his wife, we can hardly suppose that the life she led with Blount (when they were together, for he was much away from her) can have been one either of much happiness or much affection; to say nothing of the evidently insincere character and tyrannical temper of the man, or of his dark and discreditable history, and broken or at least unestablished fortunes, his extravagant or thoughtless habits, and the waste he went on committing upon her property, probably made her often in her secret heart rue the day when she put herself in his power. But she was of a light, easy, healable nature; ingenious in forgetting whatever it might be unpleasant to remember; not given to unavailing regrets, unnecessary self-reproach, or any kind

of self-tormenting; in all circumstances disposed to make the most of the present, without thinking much either about the past or the future. She could not but be overwhelmed and prostrated at first by such a crushing calamity as had now fallen upon her; her unfortunate son, with all his dazzling and attaching qualities, of whom she used to be so proud, whom she had so infinitely loved, of whom her hopes could not but have been so high, must have been lamented with many a scalding tear, with many a convulsive sob, with anguish that wrung every fibre of her heart. But she would rise again from all this, with neither the spirit of life nor the spirit of enjoyment destroyed within her. Her Essex would not be forgotten; but her memory would dwell more on his brilliant life than on his bloody death. As for her husband, she may possibly have come ere long to feel very much reconciled to the stroke of fate which had taken *him* off, before he had brought her utterly to beggary and ruin.

§ 6.

But we must leave the old lady to her ruminations, whatever they may have been, alone or with her sister Garret, in her old "ill-favoured cottage" near Tamworth, while we take up again the strange romance of her eldest daughter. How Lady Rich bore the death of Sidney, whose passionate devotion she had been listening to so short a time before, probably no record remains to tell. She certainly did not adopt Spenser's idea of "following her mate like turtle chaste;" she

underwent neither death nor metamorphosis. No change of form, such as the poet feigned; yet, perhaps, something of a change too. Even as the rosy radiance of the dawn fades into the light of common day, so will the poetry of the heart and the character die away, oftentimes, in man or in woman. It seems the saddest of all sad things, sadder than death itself; yet the one is probably a necessity of nature as well as the other. With the noble Sidney all that was noble in Penelope Devereux had been called up into activity and manifestation; no second passion, even if its object were to be equally worthy, could well be over again what that first had been. In the very admission of any new affection there was something of desecration. At the same time the Lady Rich was neither so circumstanced nor perhaps so constituted as to be likely to shut her heart very obstinately or firmly against such an intrusion. She was still young and beautiful; the foul yoke her fair neck bore was making itself every day, there is reason to believe, more galling and intolerable; her universally known *liaison* with Sidney exposed her the more to a fresh seduction; even the recollection of that attachment, and of all it had once been to her, was a further snare and temptation to her heart. We may be prepared, therefore, to find her furnishing another example of the natural tendency that there is in all that's bright to fade somewhat with time and use, another instance, not exactly of the

Desinat in piscem mulier formosa superne,

but yet of a woman who, having begun life as if she

were all poetry, manages nevertheless before she concludes it to make a very respectable display of prose.

A little affair in which Lady Rich appears within two years from the time of Sidney's death does not present her in a particularly poetical light. Among the Burghley Papers forming part of the Lansdowne Collection in the British Museum are two letters, evidently relating to the same matter, the one from the Earl of Leicester, the other from Lady Rich.* Leicester's is probably the last letter he ever wrote, that which, as already mentioned, he addressed to Burghley after leaving London on the journey to the country from which he never returned. It is as follows:—"My good Lord, My business yesternight and dispatchment would not suffer me to take my leave. But, hoping to see your Lordship or long again, I know ye will excuse such ceremonies. And here, my Lord, beside my very hearty commendations, I must commend to your good favour my suit for Sir Robert Jermyn, for whom I doubt not but Mr. Hickes hath told your Lordship how gracious her Majesty is therein. There was yesterday a great-bellied lady to have solicited the same, but she was not able to tarry thereout, your Lordship being then with her Majesty in my chamber. She hath required her uncle, your true servant, to solicit this matter; for she and her husband are both much beholding to Sir Robert Jermyn, whose suit, good my Lord, for all our sakes give your honourable furtherance, with what speed may be. And so, from mine inn at Maidenhead, I commend your Lordship to the Almighty, this 27 of August.

* *Lansdowne MS.* 57; *arts.* 45 *and* 51.

Your Lordship's assured, R. LEICESTER." And here is Lady Rich's letter, written six days after Leicester's death:—"The great favour your Lordship hath promised me, touching the request my Lord of Leicester made to her Majesty for Sir Robert Jermyn's son, hath now emboldened me to be an humble suitor to your Lordship for the performance of it, hoping only in your Lordship's favour, which is the means to accomplish my desire. Wherefore I beseech your Lordship to make me so much bound unto you, as to set it so forward as that I may shortly hope to see an end of it; and I will acknowledge it ever as proceeding from your Lordship's great favour, and will employ myself both to deserve it and to show all thankfulness for so great a benefit. I would have been glad to have waited on your Lordship myself, if I might have done you any service; but my burden is such as I am fitter to keep the house than to go any whither. Wherefore I hope your Lordship will pardon me for this time, and accept these lines, with the which I commend both my suit and myself to your Lordship's favour. York House, this 10 of September. By her that desires to merit your Lordship's favour, PENELOPE RICH." We should scarcely, after all, have been able to conjecture what it was that her Ladyship wanted, had it not been for Burghley's endorsement on her letter:—"The Lady Rich for Sir Robert Jermyn's son's Wardship." Apparently, then, her application was for the wardship, or guardianship, of one of the tenants of the crown who was a minor. This would give her the profits of the lands till the heir should reach the age of twenty-one. It was an arrangement which, at

the same time, as may be gathered from Leicester's letter, would be accounted a favour shown to the heir, as taking him out of the hands of the officers of the crown, and leaving him in the care of a friend of his late father. Whether Lady Rich obtained her suit does not appear. Her letter is carefully written in a beautiful clear Roman hand, which brings again before us the white and taper fingers that once moved upon the paper, and accords well with one's general conception of the fair calligraphist in her mind as well as in her person.

This letter is further interesting as bringing us very close upon certain other letters of her Ladyship's, which have not been preserved, but as to which, nevertheless, we have a distinct report which had been made to Burghley, who she little suspected would ever see or hear of them. Ever since the death of Mary Stuart it had been becoming clearer every day that her son, the King of Scots, must, if he lived, inherit the English crown. The removal of his mother had relieved the question of his right of succession from whatever had hitherto embarrassed it. Almost the only thing that now prevented his title from being openly admitted by everybody was the mysterious reserve affected by the Queen, with whom it appeared to be a point of dignity as well as of policy to have no recognised successor. James, who could not comprehend either the feelings or the principles upon which Elizabeth acted, seems to have at times half-frightened himself with the notion that she had some scheme in her head of escaping the necessity of giving up her place at all by so pertinaciously refusing to

say who was to come after her. We find him at last wondering, in his impatience, if she intended to endure as long as the sun and the moon.* James's anxiety was not unnatural; but neither Elizabeth nor any of her ministers can have seriously doubted or wavered on the subject. Even the Cecils, however quiet they kept in conformity with the evident wishes of her Majesty, must have long seen that his accession was inevitable. It was one of the many bad and foolish things done by Essex in the last miserable scene of his life, that on his trial he pretended to have reason to believe that Robert Cecil designed to bring in the Infanta of Spain. He afterwards asked Cecil's pardon for this, and confessed that the calumny was a pure invention of his own; but, if he had died with the re-assertion of it on his lips, it would have been incredible. Cecil was about the unlikeliest man in England to give into such a lunacy. He only bode his time; with his opportunities of close observation he was safe in holding off longer than others who were not so well placed for watching the ripening of events; when the proper moment arrived, when it became evident that Elizabeth was breaking down fast, and could not last much longer; he, too, notwithstanding his peculiar position, declared himself, and entered into communication with the Scottish King. But many others, more ardent and less shackled, had established or sought to establish a connexion in the same quarter at a much earlier date. Among the most forward of these were the Earl of Essex and his friends. At the very time when that Earl stood highest in favour with

* *Letter in Birch*, II. 512.

Elizabeth he was making overtures to James. Ultimately he urged the Scottish King to assert his claim by force of arms; it was part of his last insane project to get James to march a body of troops into England to aid him in his attack upon the Queen and her government; and James had by that time become so impatient, and had been so much deluded in regard to the popular feeling by the representations that had been made to him, and by his own sanguine expectations and desires, that, if the attempt had not been made with such reckless and preposterous precipitation, he might perhaps have actually done so. But at first, of course, nothing of this kind was hinted at or dreamt of on either side; all that was offered to the future sovereign by the parties who professed so much eagerness to become his subjects was little more than a general assurance of their readiness to stand by him in all circumstances, together with the expression of their wishes to have him among them, no matter how soon it might please heaven to take the mistress they had all served so long to itself.

It appears that Lady Rich was one of the persons who took a principal part in carrying on this secret correspondence. In the following communication made to Burghley by Mr. Thomas Fowler, from Edinburgh, under date of the 7th of October, 1589, *Rialta* stands for Lady Rich, and *Ricardo* for her husband:—"Your Lordship may please to know that I learn that Mr. Richard Douglas, coming last from London, brought down one Robert Dale, who was Secretary to my Lord and master the Earl of Leicester. The said Mr. Richard

found means to prefer *Ottoman* (that is, Dale) to the King's speech; and himself delivered a letter from the Earl of Essex to his Majesty with credit. Both these were in commission from the Earl to deal largely with his Majesty to assure him of the Earl's service and fidelity, and *Ottoman* to carry back the answer, which was not meet to be committed to writing. . . . . These two had to deal with the King for the like assurance of *Ricardo* and Lady; but no writings from the Lord, yet two several letters from *Rialta* written to Mr. Richard Douglas, whereby she remembers him of his charge for his friends, and a nickname for every one that is partaker in the matter; whereof the said Mr. Richard hath a long scroll, as an alphabet of cipher to understand them by. I can tell few of their names, but the Queen's Majesty is *Venus*, and the Earl [of Essex] the *Weary Knight*, as I remember, but always that he is exceeding weary, accounting it a thrall that he lives now in, and wishes the change. She is very pleasant in her letters, and writes the most part thereof in her brother's behalf, so as they should be showed to *Victor*, [King James] which they were, and the dark parts thereof expounded to him. He commended much the fineness of her wit, the invention, and well-writing. For the more assurance Mr. Douglas took back from the King both the Earl's letters to him and *Rialta's* to himself. The said *Ottoman* had many secret conferences with the King, which pleased him exceedingly; and Mr. Douglas won credit where before he had none. But I trow some of them went too far in persuading the poor King to hope for hap shortly, and that her Majesty could not live

above a year or two, by reason of some imperfection, I know not what. *Rialta* writes almost every week to Mr. Richard, . . . but all in their own devised terms. . . . He told me that the Earl of Essex and all his friends would be mine in anything I had to do against his mother [mistress?], or whosoever. *Rialta* especially would be so, and had willed him to assure me of it, and needs be must have me write some few lines of thanks, that she might know he had done her message, which I did; and he sent it, and received a letter from her to me in a short time, which letter contains but courteous promise of her friendship and the Earl's, when I will in particular let them know how they may stand me in stead, and a postscript how much Mr. Richard Douglas loves me. . . . This day Mr. Richard showed the King two of her letters and expounded them. I am no further trusted in these matters but in general terms, by Mr. Richard, how much the Earl loves the King and honours him, and would fain the King were so persuaded throughly."* Fowler concludes by observing that he has written about this affair, though it be no matter of great importance, in order that Burghley may not be ignorant of anything going on at the Scottish court. He entreats his Lordship, however, to keep what he has communicated a profound secret; for, if the part he had acted should be discovered, it would put him to great trouble, and might even endanger his life.

Burghley no doubt kept the information to himself. Her own nickname, as Fowler calls it, of *Venus* would

* *Murdin*, 640.

hardly have reconciled Elizabeth to Essex's representation of himself as the *Weary Knight;* and, if she had had a suspicion of what had been going on, certainly neither the Earl nor his rather too clever sister would have ever seen more of the light of her countenance, or been suffered to come near the Court while she presided in it. Fowler's letters, bequeathed by Burghley to his second son, may have been shown to her Majesty long afterwards by Sir Robert Cecil, when Essex had put himself in a position in which nothing could do him further harm. It is supposed that she was made acquainted at last with the intercourse that had been carried on between Essex and the King of Scots, and with the intentions of the latter in connexion with the attempt which brought the Earl to the scaffold, although she deemed it expedient, when two ambassadors immediately afterwards arrived from James, to dissemble her knowledge of what their master had been about. Fowler's curious communications, however, might yield Burghley some new and useful light whereby the better to understand and watch the Favourite and his connexions, not forgetting his fair correspondent in the matter of the wardship of Sir Robert Jermyn's son.

In another letter, written from Edinburgh on the night of the 20th of the same month, his spy, or secret agent, informs the English minister that *Rialta* had sent the Scottish King her picture*—that the same

* Is this picture, or any other, of Lady Rich anywhere extant? The inventory taken of Leicester's property after his death enumerates, among the goods and chattels at Wanstead, forty portraits, among which the only ones particularized are those of Henry the Eighth, Queen Mary, Queen Elizabeth, and Lady Rich. The entire collection is valued at the

messenger had brought James commendations in humble manner from the Countesses of Warwick and Cumberland—and that he had also special commissions from *Ricardo*, and from two other personages designated *Ernestus* and *Latalbot*, the latter of whom (perhaps Lord Talbot, afterwards Gilbert Seventh Earl of Shrewsbury) protested that, although, "in respect he was in the company, and so were allied to the Lady Arabella, he might be taken partial of her side," yet he knew his duty, as James should have good proof whenever time served, wherefore he earnestly entreated his Majesty to account of him. The messenger, young Constable, Fowler adds, would have had *Victor* to write to *Rialta*; "but he could not bring it to pass, for *Victor* was troubled other ways." * James in fact received the overtures of the lady and her friends at this time very coldly. "The best is," Fowler writes again on the 8th of November, "*Victor* regards not their offers much, and the instruments are worst rewarded of all that ever came here of that nation, which discourages somewhat their proceedings." †

The next notices of Lady Rich that are to be presented are of six years later date, being from the letters of Rowland White during the last three months of the year 1595. They afford indications of a new colour that has begun to come over her history since we met her

moderate sum of 11*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* But the library makes a still poorer figure than the picture gallery: it consisted only of an old Bible, a copy of Fox's Acts and Monuments, old and torn, seven Psalters, and a Service Book,—estimated to be worth altogether thirteen shillings and eight pence.—See *Wright's Essex*, II. 502, 503.

* *Murdin*, 640. † *Id.* 641.

last. On the 23rd of September, White mentions that my Lord Rich was not in town, and that his Lady was in Staffordshire with her mother; a letter which Sidney had written to his Lordship, he observes, had been inclosed with other letters in a packet which had been forwarded to Lady Rich, which was probably the reason why it had not reached its destination so soon as Sidney had expected. This may lend some glimmering of light to the following dark effusion addressed about this time by Lord Rich to Essex, which is preserved among Anthony Bacon's papers:—"My Lord, I acknowledge with all thankfulness your Lordship's favour signified by your letters which I received yesterday by my man; entreating leave also to put you in mind to remember your letters into Staffordshire to your sister and to the other party. I met this messenger from thence, but durst not intercept the letters he brings, for fear of these troublesome times will bring forth shortly a parliament, and so perhaps a law to make it treason to break open her letters written to any my lords of the council, whereby they are freely privileged to receive writings from other men's wives without any farther question, and have full authority to see every man's wife at their pleasure. A lamentable time [thing?], that this injustice should thus reign in this wicked age. I only entreat your Lordship, that, as you hear any thing farther of that matter I wrote to you of, I may have your pleasure and farther directions. And so, commending your Lordship to the blessed tuition of the Almighty, I remain your Lordship's poor brother to command in all honesty, Ro. Rich. 11th Sept. 1595."

There seems to be a clumsy attempt at jocularity here; or perhaps it is intended for delicate sarcasm; but, in any case, it is pretty evident that his Lordship is in reality a good deal out of humour. He has some far from pleasant suspicions touching the contents of those letters of his wife to her brother, which he durst not open, but must transmit to Essex along with his own. He has, however, been brought, we see, by this time, to some considerable extent under discipline, not to say subjection, by his better half. As for "the other party," and "that matter," in regard to which he expresses himself with such mysterious earnestness, we may perhaps be enabled to give a shrewd guess at who and what they probably were by the aid of what is now further to be related.

Writing again to Sidney on the 8th of October, White observes that my Lord Rich was not yet come to town. On Friday the 7th of November he writes:—"My Lady Leicester and Lady Rich are yesternight come to London, and my Lord Rich will write unto you about his hangings; I find by him that, if those hangings that are made do not answer the note he sent unto Bloq, they will not serve their turn. But by his own letter you shall hear more." Rich is not a man to be easily put off with less than his due in a matter of this kind. These hangings seem to have given himself and everybody connected with him a world of trouble. Writing to Sidney on the morning of Sunday the 16th, White begins, in a somewhat impetuous way:—"My Lord, I send your Lordship, by Will of the Scullery, the piece of hanging. My Lord Rich says that the border

is too deep, and that it is not so deep as he desires by the note Bloq hath of his." Is White taking off his Lordship? or is it his impatience of the subject that makes him report so unintelligibly? He goes on:—"My Lady Leicester said, that if it be above ten shillings the stick, it is too dear. I answered, that it seemed hangings were good cheap when she bought any. Sure I was that your Lordship would buy them as good cheap for my Lady Rich as for yourself; and so was my Lady Rich assured, who liked the hangings very well. I showed the piece to Mr. Maynard; he sent for an arras man, who truly did esteem the goodness of it as it is, and thinks it well worth sixteen or eighteen shillings the stick." So it is to be hoped that my Lord, notwithstanding his being fortified in his objections by the pecuniary scruples of his mother-in-law, would consent, though with much grumbling, to take the hangings, in obedience to the wish of his kind-hearted wife, who was satisfied that the brother of her Sidney would not be careless of any thing in which she was interested, and who, besides, had at present something else than hangings to think of.

On Monday the 1st of December, Lady Sidney was brought to bed of a son, having a few days before been taken ill with the measles. White, writing the next morning, describes the child as having come into the world "a goodly fat boy, but as full of the measles in the face as can be." On the 5th he writes to Sidney as follows;—"Your letter to my Lady Rich, sent by Risley, as she says, was to desire her to be a godmother, which she doth most willingly agree to, and so desired

me to let you know, which she would herself have done but that she was going to Epsom. I then told her that long before I knew both your Lordship and my Lady had an intent to desire that honor at her hand, but as things fell out I was assured that neither of you would, for any thing in the world, request her unto it. And, she being most desirous to know why, I answered her that my Lady and the child both * had the measles. To which she suddenly replied, that after eight days there was no danger to be feared, and therefore it shall be no occasion to keep me from doing Sir Robert Sidney and my Lady a greater kindness. When I saw her so desperate, I humbly besought her Ladyship to take a longer time to think upon the danger, which she did till that afternoon; and then, coming to her to Essex House, she told me she was resolved, and therefore desired me to let your Lordship and my Lady know it. She asked me who was thought upon to be the godfathers; I said, my Lord Montjoy for one, but I could not well tell who the other should be. Thence I went to Holborn, and found my Lord Montjoy at his house. I said my Lady sent me unto him to desire him, both in your name and hers, to christen your son that was newly born, which he very honourably promised to do; and, when I told him my Lady Rich was godmother, he was much pleased at it; and assuring me, whensoever the day was appointed, he would not fail to be there." Let her desperate Ladyship beware of worse perils than the measles. In a subsequent passage it is intimated that Lady Rich had expressed a desire that the christen-

* Misprinted, or perhaps miswritten, "born."

ing should be put off till within three or four days of Christmas, because till then she would be in the country; and that White had been sent to her by Lady Sidney to say that it should be then, or when else she would please to appoint it.

There is a succession of further communications on this subject. After she had gone down to the country, Lady Rich found that she could not come back to town before Christmas-eve. She would then appoint the day for the christening. On the 20th White writes, that Montjoy and Lord Compton, who had been asked to be the other godfather, attended her pleasure. On St. Stephen's Day, the 26th, he writes;—"My Lady Rich is come to the town; yet the christening is put off till Wednesday, New Year's Eve. She says that my Lord Compton desired her to defer it till then, because of some urgent business he hath in the country, that will keep him away till Tuesday night; but I do rather think it to be a tetter that suddenly broke out in her fair white forehead, which will not be well in five or six days, that keeps your son from being christened. But my Lady Rich's desires are obeyed as commandment by my Lady, who, indeed, is sorry of this delay, because she would have it past before your return." The light of day is not a more precious nor a more queenly thing than is my Lady Rich. The spot upon the sun, however, probably soon disappeared; for the ceremony was not further deferred. "Your son," White writes on the 3rd of January, "was christened upon New Year's Eve by my Lord Montjoy, Lord Compton, and Lady Rich. They named him Robert,

by my Lady Rich's desire. They gave three very fair standing bowls, all of one fashion, that may be worth £20 a piece. Here was my Lady Cumberland, her daughter; my Lady of Essex, her daughter and son; my Lady Dacres, her daughters; and many other gentlewomen and gentlemen. All things were so provided, as they had no cause to fear the measles."*

The eye for whom chiefly the beauty desired on this occasion to appear in full blaze was no doubt my Lord Montjoy,—he whom White made so happy by informing him that Lady Rich was to be the godmother. Charles Blount, who now bore this title, has already been made slightly known to the reader. He is "the other Blount" who is several times mentioned in the communications of Morgan, the Welshman, as the relation and intimate friend of Christopher Blount. The house from which they were both sprung was one of distinguished antiquity. The old heralds and genealogists, indeed, used to carry back the line to old Rome itself. The name, it was said, was plainly in sound identical with that of the Italian Blondi, and in sense with that of the Roman Flavii; the three races, therefore, were all one; they were the family with brown or yellow hair. This ingenious account, however, is now given up. The English Blounts are said to be all descended from two brothers who came over with the Conqueror, sons of the Norman Lord of Guines; and the descent of the Lords of Guines, again, is traced to King Harold the Fifth of Denmark, who lived in the eighth century, and was the great-great-grandfather of our Canute the

* *Sidney Papers*, I. 348—336.

Great. No Italian sun seems to have had anything to do with the brown hair which is said to have long continued a prevalent characteristic of the race, and which in truth would have indicated rather a northern and Teutonic than a southern origin. But the English Blounts are an interesting family for their connexion with our literature, as well as for their antiquity and nobility. Not to mention two learned divines of the thirteenth century, Richard Blondus, Blount, or Blundy, who was Bishop of Exeter, and John Blount, who was at one time very near being Archbishop of Canterbury, both of whom were probably of this stock, it produced in more recent times Sir Henry Blount, the eastern traveller, and his two sons, Sir Thomas Pope Blount, author of the *Censura Celebriorum Auctorum*, and Charles Blount, famous for his *Life of Apollonius Tyanaeus* and other works. Pope's two friends and favourites, Martha and Teresa Blount, were daughters of a branch of this family long settled at Maple Durham, in Oxfordshire. Of another branch, the eldest of all, though it had changed its name, came Justice Croke, the well-known author of the *Reports*, and his descendant the late Sir Alexander Croke, to whom we are indebted for an elaborate "Genealogical History of the Croke Family, originally named Le Blount," printed at Oxford, in two volumes quarto, in 1823—a work, however, at least in the part of it relating to Charles Lord Montjoy, both defective and positively erroneous in no slight degree.

There was a race of Blounts, or Le Blunds, Barons by tenure from the Conquest till near the end of the reign

of Henry the Third. The last of them was slain at the battle of Lewes, in 1263. Other Barons by writ, of the same name, occur in the reigns of Edward the Second and Third. But the first Lord Montjoy was Walter Blount, who was created by Edward the Fourth Baron Montjoy of Thurveston, in the County of Derby, in 1465. His grandson, William, the fourth Lord, is celebrated as the pupil, friend, patron, and correspondent of Erasmus. Of him Sir Alexander Croke has given a long and interesting account. He was succeeded in 1535 by his son, Charles the fifth Lord, who was also an eminent scholar, and the friend of Erasmus and of Leland. His character may be understood from what Dugdale relates of him. Going to serve with the army in France in 1544, he made his testament, in which, after ordering a monument to be placed over his body if he should be slain in battle, with an inscription in verse (a very humble attempt), he further directed, we are told (as if he had some hope of bribing Providence), that, if he should escape the wars, "then his body, without any curiosity or costly ceremonies, should be brought to the church most of resort thereabouts, and a tomb there to be erected for him according to his degree; also, that, for the space of two years after his decease, a godly and discreet man should be chosen out to edify the youth of the parish of Westbury-under-the-Plain (in Wiltshire) with two lectures; whereof the first lecture to be every day in the morning ordained for the catechising of children, that thereby they might be perfectly instructed to know what they profess in their baptism, in their Paternoster how to pray, in their

Ave Maria to know how our Lord ought to be honoured, and in the Ten Commandments; and that he who should be reader should not only read unto them, but also appose them, as they do in matters of grammar;—the second lecture to be within the same parish at afternoon four times in the week, that is to say, on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday, to [all] them that come; wherein chiefly to be declared the duty of subjects to their King and Magistrates for maintainance of good order and obeisance, not only for fear but for conscience, with Scriptures divine and profane policies consonant thereunto, as also increpation of vice, with their texts of Scripture; and for performance thereof the reader to have twenty marks by the year."* Religion was a subject in which the Blounts were prone to take an interest. One sign of this was that after the Reformation several branches of the family continued to adhere to the old religion. Pope's friends, the Blounts of Maple Durham, it may be remembered, were, like himself, Catholics. So, as we have seen, were Sir Christopher Blount and his father and mother. With Charles Blount, the biographer of Apollonius, again, the same spirit took a different turn; he, as is well known, meditated on the question of religion till he became a sceptic or deist.

The fifth Lord Montjoy appears to have, after all, died in his bed. With all his piety, he has the credit of having been a great waster of his inheritance. He was succeeded in 1545 by his son James, who, instead of religion, took to alchemy, which he prosecuted till

* *Baronage*, I. 521.

most of what remained of the family estates had gone off in smoke and vapour. The little that was left was nearly all squandered, in a more common-place style of dissipation, by his eldest son William, who succeeded to the title in 1582. William dying without issue in 1594, his younger brother Charles then became the eighth Lord.

He was at this time in his thirty-first or thirty-second year, and was already a person of considerable note. He had received something of a university education, and his original destination seems to have been the law. But other prospects had early opened upon him. His first introduction at Court is thus related by Sir Robert Naunton :—" As he came from Oxford he took the Inner Temple in his way to Court, whither he no sooner came but, without asking, he had a pretty strange kind of admission, which I have heard from a discreet man of his own, and much more of the secrets of those times. He was then much about twenty years of age, of a brown hair, a sweet face, a most neat composure, and tall in his person. The Queen was then at Whitehall and at dinner, whither he came to see the fashion of the Court: the Queen had soon found him out, and, with a kind of an affected frown, asked the Lady Carver what he was. She answered she knew him not; insomuch as inquiry was made from one to another what he might be, till at length it was told the Queen he was brother to the Lord William Montjoy [or, as we should now say, William Lord Montjoy.] This inquisition, with the eye of Majesty fixed upon him, as she was wont to do, and to daunt men she knew not, stirred the

blood of this young gentleman, insomuch as his colour came and went; which the Queen observing, called him unto her, and gave him her hand to kiss, encouraging him with gracious words and new looks; and so, diverting her speech to the Lords and Ladies, she said that she no sooner observed him but that she knew there was in him some noble blood, with some other expressions of pity towards his house; and, then again demanding his name, she said, 'Fail you not to come to the Court, and I will bethink myself how to do you good.' And this was his inlet and the beginnings of his grace. Where it falls into consideration that, though he wanted not wit and courage (for he had very fine attractions, and being a good piece of a scholar), yet were they accompanied with the retractives of bashfulness and a natural modesty, which (as the tone of his house and the ebb of his fortune then stood) might have hindered his progression, had they not been reinforced by the infusion of sovereign favour, and the Queen's gracious invitation." *

No spirit, however, could be readier than young Blount's to follow the beckoning thus accorded, to seize the hand held out to him by fortune. "Give me leave," writes his secretary, Fynes Moryson, "to remember that which I received from his mouth, that in his childhood, when his parents would have his picture, he chose to be drawn with a trowel in his hand, and this motto, *Ad reaedificandum antiquam domum* (To rebuild the ancient house). For this noble and ancient barony was decayed, not so much by his progenitors'

* *Fragmenta Regalia.*

prodigality, as by his father's obstinate addiction to the study and practice of alchemy, by which he so long laboured to increase his revenues, till he had almost fully consumed them."* We have found Morgan in March, 1586, speaking of Blount as having taken the place of Raleigh in the fond partiality of the Queen. But he had already, the year before this, been returned to parliament for the borough of St. Ives; in 1586, he was elected member for Beeralston; and, although none of the formal accounts of his life mention the circumstance, he also that same year made his first campaign in arms. We learn that from the following passage in a long and elaborate elegy written upon him immediately after his death by Samuel Daniel:—

"The Belgic war first tried thy martial spirit,
And what thou wert, and what thou would'st be found,
And marked thee there, according to thy merit,
With honour's stamp, a deep and noble wound;
And that same place that rent from mortal men
Immortal Sidney, glory of the field
And glory of the Muses, and their pen,
Who equal bare the caduce and the shield,
Had likewise been thy last, had not the fate
Of England then reserved thy worthy blood," &c.

So that Blount, as well as Sidney, was present at the fight of Zutphen, on the 22nd of September, 1586, and was dangerously wounded there. He was soon to be wounded again, in another way, where Sidney had also been stricken.

"This gentleman," writes the sonorous rhetorical

* *Itinerary; Part* II. p. 45.

Heylin, "being a younger brother of William, Lord Montjoy, and known only by the name of Sir Charles Blount while his brother lived, had borne a strong and dear affection to the Lady Penelope, daughter of Walter, Earl of Essex, a lady in whom lodged all attractive graces of beauty, wit, and sweetness of behaviour, which might render her the absolute mistress of all eyes and hearts. And she so far reciprocated with him in the like affection (being a complete and gallant man), that some assurances passed between them of a future marriage. But her friends, looking on him as a younger brother, considerable only in his dependency at the court, chose rather to dispose her in marriage to Robert Lord Rich, a man of an independent fortune and a known estate, but otherwise of an uncourtly disposition, unsociable, austere, and of no very agreeable conversation to her. Against this Blount had nothing to plead in bar, the promise which passed between them being made in private, no witnesses to attest unto it, and therefore not amounting to a pre-contract in due form of law. But long she had not lived in the bed of Rich, when the old flames of her affection unto Blount began again to kindle in her; and, if the sonnet in the Arcadia, *A neighbour mine not long ago there was, &c.*, be not too generally misconstrued, she made her husband the sole instrument to acquaint him with it. But, whether it were so or not, certain it is, that, having first had their private meetings, they afterwards conversed more openly and familiarly with one another than might stand with honour unto either; especially when, by the death of his elder brother, the title of

Lord Montjoy, and the estate remaining to it, had accrued unto him."*

Heylin, writing nearly a century after, and writing loosely about everything, is here, no doubt, quite out in his chronology. Penelope Devereux had probably been married to Lord Rich when Charles Blount was only a boy of seventeen or eighteen. Blount himself, as we shall presently find, says not a word, in his account of their connexion, of any affection between him and Lady Rich before her marriage, or of his having ever seen her till long afterwards. All that Heylin so gravely states, therefore, about the assurances or promises that passed between them, amounting only not to a legal pre-contract, may be dismissed as a flight of fancy of his, or a half-forgotten dream of something that he had heard about the Lady Penelope and Sidney. Of that affair, it will be observed, nothing is here said. The two stories, therefore, had got confused together in Heylin's brain. What he calls a sonnet is a poem of above a hundred and twenty lines, in the Fourth Book of the *Arcadia*, which cannot, with the least probability, be supposed to have any reference either to Montjoy or to Sidney. That the former should be its hero, indeed, is impossible.

Elizabeth's more youthful favourites, such as Sidney, Blount, and Essex, all gave her no little trouble in keeping them near her person. They were constantly trying to run away. Blount had several times made his escape, and gone off to the wars. Once when he had joined the army in France, where the Commander,

* *Cyprianus Anglicus*, 50.

Sir John Norris, gave him a company, her Majesty, as soon as she heard where he was, sent orders for his return home immediately. "Serve me so once more," she addressed him, when she again got hold of him, "and I will lay you fast enough. You will never leave till you get knocked on the head, as that foolish fellow Sidney was. You shall go when I send you." She then desired him to lodge in the Court, and there for the present to study the art of war in books. He is said to have been knighted in 1586. In the great year 1588 Charles Blount was, according to Camden, one of the "English gentry of the younger sort," who, when the Spanish armament appeared on the coast, "entered themselves volunteers, and, taking leave of their parents, wives, and children, did, with incredible cheerfulness, hire ships at their own charge, and, in pure love to their country, joined the grand fleet in vast numbers." * His portrait is said to have been among those of the other Captains on the tapestry which formerly decorated the House of Lords. There is no mention of him, however, in the authentic list of the Commanders.† In 1593 he was again returned to parliament for Beeralston. His acquaintance with Essex, according to Naunton, had a singular commencement. One day he so charmed Elizabeth by his performance at a tilting-match that, as soon as it was over, she sent him as a token of her favour, a chess-queen of gold, richly enamelled, which the next morning his servants fastened to his arm with a crimson riband. On his passing through the privy-chamber thus decorated, his cloak gathered under his

* *Elizabeth*, 547. † *Murdin*, 615, &c.

arm so that the Queen's present might be fully displayed, Essex asked Mr. Fulk Greville what the ornament was, and what it meant. Being informed, "Now I perceive," he rejoined, "every fool must have his favour." It does not appear that the remark was heard by Blount, or intended to be over-heard by him; but it was presently carried to him, upon which he challenged Essex; and they met and fought in or near Marylebone Park (now the Regent's Park). The result was, that Essex was wounded in the thigh and disarmed. When her Majesty was told what had happened, her wrath seems to have all discharged itself upon the Earl. "God's death!" she swore, "it is fit that some one should take him down, and teach him better manners; else there will be no rule with him." Now, however, the nobleness of nature that lay at the heart of Essex, never wholly put out till remorse and self-contempt seem to have well nigh bereft him of his senses in the last hours of his life, and often bursting forth in sudden strength, consuming everything that impeded or encumbered it, re-asserted its dominion. He felt that he had been the aggressor; he accepted his defeat as a proper punishment; he requited the skill and prowess to which he had been forced to yield, not with his envy, or hatred, and study of revenge, but with his admiration; and he and his adversary became fast friends. It was now, probably, that Blount and the Lady Rich, the attached sister of Essex, were thrown into each other's society.

How long this may have been before the christening of Sir Robert Sidney's son, where they stood together

at the font, on the last day of the year 1595, is not to be collected from Naunton's account. In the preceding year, 1594, as already mentioned, Blount had, by the death of his brother, "a person," says Camden, "who had been much weakened by the excesses of his youth,"* become Lord Montjoy, inheriting, according to Naunton, along with the title an income of not more than a thousand marks per annum; wherewith, nevertheless, we are told, "he lived plentifully, in a fine way and garb." But he had, shortly before he succeeded to the peerage, been appointed to the governorship of Portsmouth, a place which must have been of some value. It had been previously held by Henry Ratcliffe, Earl of Sussex, who died in April 1594.† Matters, it may be conjectured, had not yet gone very far between Montjoy and Lady Rich, when, as was still apparently the case, it was a somewhat rare happiness for them to meet, even on such public or ceremonial occasions as the christening, and when the lady shrunk from showing herself with a pimple on her fair face. But it is evident that their growing interest in each other had begun to attract observation, and that their friends who wished to gratify them laid themselves out to bring them together. The lady's husband seems to have been no impediment in anybody's estimation.‡

* *Elizabeth*, 581. † *Dugdale*, II. 287.

‡ Perhaps, however, it may have been this peculiar position of his domestic affairs that kept Lord Rich from joining the first Spanish expedition, under the conduct of his brother-in-law, in the summer of 1596. And was it this state of things also that kept Montjoy at home? For, surely he cannot be the person designated *Charles Blount* in the list of the officers employed in that expedition, who commanded as Lieutenant-

Of Lady Rich in this year 1595, we find a few slight traces, in addition to the letter written to her from Cadiz by Sir Christopher Blount, which has been already noticed. Three short notes of hers to her brother are preserved among the papers of Anthony Bacon at Lambeth, which speak, as everything else we know of her does, her facility of nature and kindness of heart. One is a recommendation to Essex of the bearer, Mr. Harvey, whom she describes as a neighbour, and as being very importunate to have the Earl's favour for a certain office which had fallen vacant. But she only asks him to do in the matter as he pleases. The second, which is endorsed as having been received in March, 1596, is a more earnest application. "Worthy Brother," she writes, "I was so loth to importune you for this poor gentlewoman, as I took this petition from her the last time I was at the Court, and yesterday I sent her word by her man that I would not trouble you with it, but wished her to make some other friends. Upon which message, her husband, that hath been subject to franticness through his troubles, grew in such despair, as his wife's infinite sorrow makes me satisfy her again, who thinks that none will pity her misery and her children if you do not; since, if he cannot have pardon, he must fly, and leave them in very poor estate. Dear Brother, let her know your pleasure; and believe that I endlessly remain your most faithful sister, PENELOPE RICH." The third is as follows:—"Dear Brother, I

Colonel the first company in Sir Christopher Blount's regiment, and who was knighted by Essex after the capture of Cadiz. (*Birch*, II. 16, and 50).

pray you favour this bearer, who was my steward till he got a wife, and let him by your grace obtain to be Under Sheriff this year, which my Lord Rich and I desire very much. And I hope, also, he will be able to do you service in his charge, because of his sufficiency. If you can guess who shall be chosen, he may have your letter beforehand, since otherwise they use to excuse it by a former promise. And so, referring him and his suit to your direction, I remain your sister that most infinitely loves you, PENELOPE RICH." There is no date. Birch, too, has printed a letter of Lady Rich's to Anthony Bacon, dated the 3rd of May, 1596, in which, after warm professions of regard, she says:—"While I am in this solitary place, where no sound of any news can come, I must entreat you to let me hear something of the world from you, especially of my brother, and what you know of the French affairs, or whether there go any troops from hence to their aid." *

In a postscript to this letter to Bacon Lady Rich adds:—"I would fain hear what becomes of your wandering neighbour." This was the notorious Antonio Perez, formerly sole Secretary of State to Philip the Second of Spain, who, being charged both with betraying his master's secrets and intriguing with his mistress, had been expelled from that post, which he and his father, Gonzalo Perez, had held under Philip and his father for more than forty years, and thrown into prison, whence, however, he soon effected his escape to France. He appears to have first made his appearance in England in the latter end of the year 1592.†

* *Birch*, I. 475. † *Id.* I. 140.

He speedily established an intimate connexion with Essex, to whom he recommended himself by his knowledge of Spanish affairs, and his professed readiness to forward any scheme of mischief against his native country, as well as by his amusing and companionable qualities. The Earl kept him for some time in his house; and Perez, whose habit it was to be very much at his ease wherever he found himself, quickly came to be on the most familiar footing with all his Lordship's friends of either sex. Birch has printed a note written about March or April 1595, to Anthony Bacon, by one of his chief purveyors of intelligence at that time, Anthony Standen, which is interesting as bringing Perez and Lady Rich before us together. As they were at supper, Standen says, (it does not appear where,) Lady Rich, Signor Perez, Sir Nicholas Clifford, and himself, Essex and Sir Robert Sidney suddenly came into the room, when it was arranged that Perez should accompany Essex to Court on the following morning at eight o'clock, after which his Lordship announced he should go to dine at Walsingham House, paying a visit to Mr. Anthony Bacon on his way thither. On this Lady Rich said she also would go and dine with them at Walsingham House; and when Essex asked how she would be conveyed, she answered that she would go in the coach with him and Sidney, Sir Robert going on with her while her brother made his call on Bacon, and then returning in the coach for his Lordship.*

* Anthony Bacon lived at this time in a house in Bishopsgate Street, not far from the Bull Inn, to the great concern of his mother, who not only dreaded that the plays and interludes acted at the Bull might corrupt

"All which," continues Standen, "I write unto you, Sir, by way of advice, to the end you be not taken unarmed. Women's discretions being uncertain, it may be she will not dismount, and the contrary also will fall out." His meaning seems to be, that it was impossible to calculate whether Lady Rich might look in upon Bacon along with her brother or no. He adds that it was now resolved that Perez should not leave England for the present, the Earl having provided for him the office which they confide in Turkey to the most trustworthy description of servants, that of having the custody of the fairest dames; "so that he wills me," says Standen, "to write, that, for the bond he hath with my Lord, he cannot refuse that office."*

Graver personages, however, held aloof from the sparkling renegade. It was with much difficulty that Burleigh was prevailed upon to admit him to a conference; and Elizabeth, though she at last consented to make him a small pecuniary grant for his subsistence, and to allow him, as would appear from this letter of Standen's, to go through the form of kissing her hand, would never otherwise countenance him. Old puritanical Lady Bacon, as may be supposed, held him in horror. In a letter to her son Anthony, which Birch has printed, she expresses her apprehension that his brother Francis has already drawn down a judgment upon himself by his intimacy with the Spaniard.

his servants, but, on her son's own account, objected to the parish as being without a godly clergyman. *Birch*, I. 173.

* *Birch*, I. 230.

"Though I pity your brother," she says, "yet, so long as he pities not himself, but keepeth that bloody Perez, yea as a coach companion and bed companion, a proud, profane, costly fellow, whose being about him I verily fear the Lord God doth mislike, and doth less bless your brother in credit and otherwise in his health, surely I am utterly discouraged, and make conscience farther to undo myself to maintain such wretches as he is, that never loved your brother but for his own credit, living upon him." *

It is to be feared that Perez was in truth but an unsafe associate for the Lady Rich, in more ways than one. The impression he had left of himself in France is indicated in a dispatch of M. de Villeroy, Henry the Fourth's Secretary of State, in which he advises the Count de Beaumont, the French Ambassador in England, to "take care lest Antonio, by his usual insinuations and flatteries, should work upon the minds of the courtiers and court ladies, and by that means be enabled to do some service to the King of Spain, important enough to merit his restoration to the estate and honours which he had formerly enjoyed there.† De Villeroy goes on to declare, that, of all the persons he had ever known, this Spaniard, judging by the way in which he conducted himself while in France, seemed to him to be at once the vainest and most presumptuous and the most imprudent. Lady Rich's postscript to her letter to Anthony Bacon, which was probably written from her mother's, at Drayton Basset, may have been partly prompted by a note in Spanish she had

* *Birch*, I. 143. † *Id.* 141.

received a short time before from Perez, a translation of which is among Birch's papers in the Museum. It is dated the 26th of March in this year. "Signor Wilson," it begins, "hath given me news of the health of your Ladyships, the three sisters and goddesses, as in particular that all three have amongst yourselves drunk and caroused unto Nature in thankfulness of that you owe unto her, in that she gave you not these delicate shapes to keep them idle, but rather that you should push forth unto us here many buds of those divine beauties."* Whatever may be the precise meaning of this, it will serve for a sample of the style of compliment in which Perez dealt. The "three sisters and goddesses" may perhaps be Lady Rich, Lady Northumberland, and Lady Essex. The rest of the note is of a still more dubious character. Among other things, he speaks of a book which he has got, full of secrets of a certain kind, and with which, if he shall return to England, he will not need to seek his living of any body. "My book," he says, "will serve my turn. But I will not be so good cheap this second time. My receipts will cost dearer. Wherefore let every one provide." The bright eyes to which the epistle was addressed would, at any rate, read it with intelligence enough. Perez had returned to France in the preceding summer.

Some of the facts that have last presented themselves make one curious to know what manner of man my Lord Rich may have been. The first of the Riches of whom Dugdale had found any considerable mention

* *Sloane MS.* 4115.

was Richard Rich, an opulent London mercer, who was Sheriff in 1441. Other authorities state that the grandfather of the Sheriff was a John de Rich (perhaps *Ricci*), a native of Lombardy. But a third account makes the ancestors of the Sheriff to have been settled at Rich's place, in Hampshire, as early as the time of Edward the Second. The Sheriff, who died in 1469, is said to have left two sons, the second of whom, Thomas, had a son Richard, whose eldest son, of the same name, having studied the law, became Henry the Eighth's Solicitor-General, Lord Chancellor in the next reign, and the first Lord Rich. Having been appointed by Henry, whose servile and unscrupulous instrument he had been, one of the assistants for the execution of his last will, he was made a peer by the Council of Regency in the commencement of the reign of Edward, and Chancellor about nine months afterwards. This first Lord Rich has left one of the worst reputations, both public and private, in our history. He left also, however, estates of immense extent, and a heap of money, to his son Robert, who succeeded as the second Lord Rich in 1568. It was he who accompanied Walter, Earl of Essex to Ireland in 1573. The second Lord Rich died in 1581; when he was succeeded by his son Robert the third Lord, who married the Lady Penelope Devereux. We have seen what a character of him tradition had preserved as reported by Heylin, whose account, although wrong in some of its facts, is less likely to misrepresent such a point as this. If it be true, indeed, that Rich obtained Penelope Devereux for his wife by in a manner purchasing her from her

relations, that he had her dragged as a sacrifice to the altar,—and it will be seen presently what strong authority we have for that averment—there need not another word be said; such a fact is conclusive in proof of the thoroughly ignoble nature of the man. There seems, however, to have been no force or power of any kind about his character, nothing but mere baseness of spirit. It is probable enough, as is asserted, that he treated the unhappy woman of whom he had in so flagitious a manner obtained the legal possession, with little kindness from the first; but his ill usage of her may perhaps be assumed to have consisted rather in the corrosive torment of a sour or peevish temper than in any domineering tyranny. The lady, in truth, was not a person at all likely to submit to that. In Penelope Devereux my Lord Rich had not found exactly a rose without a thorn to stick in his button-hole. For a few years she might oppose little resistance to what she had to bear, beyond a proud and silent sorrow; so long as her Sidney lived to love and to be loved, little may have appeared in her but what was high and noble; but, that morning hour of romance and poetry over, she would be as apt as most others to give demonstration of all the variety of her woman's nature and her woman's wit, and to make her baffled and humbled husband wish in his inmost heart that he had never had anything to do with her. He would certainly be no match at all, armed only with his long purse and his ill temper, for her cleverness, and unscrupulousness, and profound contempt for him and everything belonging to him—with the world's laughter and applause, besides, all on her side,

and everybody looking upon him as only getting what he richly deserved.

Yet his money—for it could be nothing else—appears to have procured him a certain formal respect, or toleration, in the midst of all this. His wife continued to make his house her home, at least whenever she found it convenient to do so; she bore him children occasionally; and her brother and her other relations kept up a civil if not a very frequent or intimate intercourse with him. At one time some attempt seems even to have been made to bring him forward in public life. Essex, as we have seen, took him with him on the second Spanish expedition in 1597. In September of the preceding year he had accompanied the Earl of Shrewsbury on an embassy to France. The following curious note written by him soon after his return from this adventure in answer to an application from Essex, is preserved among the papers of Anthony Bacon:—"I am glad any way to hear of your Lordship's good health, and sorry that I cannot entertain this gentleman it pleaseth your Lordship to command in a place worthy his good parts. Myself, as your Lordship well knoweth, am a poor man of no language, only in the French, having therein but a little oversight with coming over to attend my Lord of Shrewsbury's, at [?] which being now performed, I look not for like occasion. And, therefore, the gentleman might with me have small or no use of his gifts that way. In respect whereof, if you will, give me leave on his behalf to be a suitor to attend any service it shall like your Lordship to employ him in that will be more acceptable to his desires. And so in

haste take my leave of your Lordship, with my best prayers to bless you. From Belhouse, this 23rd of December, 1596. Your Lordship's poor Brother to command, Ro. Rich."

This paints the man to the life. There is clearly no hope of getting anything out of my Lord Rich for such cases as the present. Essex must send his needy hangers-on elsewhere than to his wealthy brother-in-law. The letter, before being dispatched, had passed through the hands of Lady Rich; and her too wild wit, or spirit of mockery, has left its mark upon sundry places of her Lord's solemn performance. Some of her interlineations and underscorings were certainly never intended for the eye of posterity; a Postscript, however, which she has appended may be transcribed:—"You may imagine my Lord Rich hath no employment for a language secretary,—except he hath gotten a mistress in France." Poor Lord Rich!

When her Ladyship perpetrated this little piece of malice, exactly a year had elapsed since she had met Lord Montjoy at the christening of Sir Robert Sidney's child. She and Montjoy probably soon after that came to a clear understanding; nor, from what we have already seen, can it be supposed that their attachment was kept much of a secret. It is evident, that both Essex and the Sidneys knew what was going forward, and there is every reason to believe that they encouraged and favoured it. Sir Robert Sidney continued to cultivate the friendship of the lady with more earnestness than ever. On the 19th of March, 1597, we find White writing to him as follows:—"To Lady

Rich I said, that I was commanded to present your service unto her, and to desire her to hold you still in her good opinion. She thanked me very heartily .... I took this opportunity to beseech her to do you one favour, which was to deliver this letter (and shewed it her) to the Queen; she kissed it, and took it, and told me that you had never a friend in court would be more ready than herself to do you any pleasure; I besought her, in the love I found she bore you, to take some time this night to do it; and, without asking anything at all of the contents of it, she put it in her bosom, and assured me, that this night, or to-morrow morning, it would be read, and bid me attend her." The letter was a very earnest petition which Sidney had sent over for the vacant place of Warden of the Cinque Ports. White had applied to various persons to present it without success; it was Saturday night, and Lady Warwick was going to the country on Monday, and could not, therefore, expect to be able to report any answer from her Majesty; Lady Huntingdon could not be at the court till Tuesday; the Earl of Essex had been sick, and was keeping his chamber; some one else, when asked, declared, with an oath, that the application was too late, for the place had been already given away; every body had some excuse or other; at last, a friend at court advised the perplexed secretary to go to Lady Rich, for he had often heard her use all kind and loving speeches of Sidney. The place was given about two months afterwards to Sidney's competitor, Lord Cobham.

But, soon after this, Lady Rich was threatened with

what might have clouded the lustre of her beauty much more than the slight eruption she had thought so much of about a year ago would have done if it had never gone away. She was attacked by small-pox. The disease, however, used her with all gentleness. "They say," White writes, on the 13th of April, "the small-pox hath not much disfigured the excellent fair Lady Rich. She keeps in yet." And again, on the 19th: "My Lady Rich is recovered of her small-pox without any blemish to her beautiful face." One would like to know how her husband felt upon this occasion; whether, during her illness, he was particularly anxious about the saving of her face, or even of her life. It so happens, that a letter of his to Essex, written after his wife was out of danger, has been preserved; but it is expressed in his Lordship's usual dark style, and not much can be made of it. It would appear to have contained an inclosure relating to some young lady in whom Lady Rich took an interest—touching which, and other matters, his Lordship enigmatises away as follows:—"My Lord, your sister, being loth to send you any of her infection, hath made me an instrument to send you this enclosed epistle of Dutch [?] true or false love; wherein if I be not in the right, I may be judged more infected than fitteth my profession, and to deserve worse than the pox of the smallest size. If it fall out so, I disburden myself, and am free from such treason, by my disclosing it to a Councillor, who, as your Lordship well knows, cannot be guilty of any such offence. Your Lordship sees, by this care of a fair maid's beauty, she doth not altogether despair of

recovery of her own again; which, if she did, assuredly envy of others' fairness would make her willingly to send infection amongst them. This banishment makes me that I cannot attend on you; and this wicked disease will cause your sister this next week to be at more charge to buy a masker's visor to meet you dancing in the fields than she would on [once?] hoped ever to have done. If you dare meet her, I beseech you preach patience unto her, which is my only theme of exhortation. Thus, over saucy to trouble your Lordship's weightier affairs, I take my leave, and ever remain your Lordship's poor brother to command, Ro. RICH.—St. Bar [?], the 16th of April, 1597."

It appears, that it was not without considerable hesitation that Rich joined the Spanish expedition of this year. "My Lord Rich," Sir William Brown, one of the captains, writes to Sidney from Plymouth, on the 29th of July, "though once he was resolved to go, now, as it seems, is in doubt what to do."* When Essex was first ordered to keep his chamber at Nonsuch, on his return from Ireland, in September 1599, White reports both Rich and Montjoy as among the Lords who visited him; but we find no further mention of the former going near his brother-in-law after he was sent in custody to London, and matters had come to look serious. As for Montjoy, he was immediately compelled by the Queen to take Essex's place as Governor of Ireland. This he did, whatever may have been his reasons, with great reluctance. "He was with her Majesty a very great while, as I hear, excusing it,"

* *Sidney Papers*, II. 58.

White writes from Richmond on the 20th of October, "with his not being able to undergo so great a service, that his health would not serve him, for he found himself unable to abide the climate of Ireland. Wherein he shews his love to the Earl of Essex; for it is thought that, if anything procure his liberty, it will be the necessity of sending him over again."* Perhaps his love for the Earl's sister may also have had a part in Montjoy's disinclination to leave England at this moment. On the other hand, it may have been one of her Majesty's reasons for forcing him to go.

Their connexion had certainly by this time become, or very soon after this came to be, quite notorious. Camden, speaking of Essex's conduct in the latter part of the year 1600, after he had been discharged from custody, first describes the various methods resorted to by himself and his friends to heighten his popularity, telling us that "he began now to give free access to all comers;" and that "Merrick, his steward, kept open house for all swordsmen, malcontents, and broken gentlemen, and admitted buffoons and parasites of all sorts;" while "some of the warmer clergy set up popular lectures [the historian means in Essex-House], which the tradesmen mightily frequented;" and then he adds, "And the Earl received daily visits from his sister the Lady Rich, who had lost the Queen's favour for abusing her husband's bed."† The last time she was at Court appears to have been on the 20th of December in the

* *Sidney Papers*, II. 134.

† In the Latin, "Quae, violato mariti thoro," &c. In revising his work, however, the historian had softened the expression to "Quae, mariti thorum violare suspecta."

preceding year.* On the 19th of January following, White writes to Sidney:—"My Lady Rich went to Richmond to-day, but lost her labour, for her Majesty was ready to come away to Chelsea; she can yet obtain no leave to see the Earl of Essex her brother." Before the end of the next month, as we have seen, she was commanded to keep her house, as suspected of having been accessory to the publication of a certain letter which she had addressed to her Majesty.

In the first instance, probably, the letter was only circulated in manuscript; but on the 13th of May White reports that it was said to have been printed, "which," he observes, "is an exceeding wrong done to the Earl of Essex." It has not come down to us in print. But in a manuscript volume preserved in the Museum, entitled "Certain Letters written by the Right Hon. Robert late Earl of Essex, &c.; Gathered by M. K.,"† there is a copy of "The Lady Rich her Letter to the Queen concerning my Lord of Essex, her brother," which Birch, to whom the volume formerly belonged, has given as probably the one on account of which she was ordered into confinement or seclusion. It is an extraordinary piece of composition enough. "Early did I hope this morning," the writer begins,—the day, perhaps, being that on which she had gone to Richmond,—"to have had mine eyes blessed with your Majesty's beauty; but, seeing the sun depart into a cloud, and meeting with spirits that did presage by the wheels of their chariot some thunder in the air, I must complain and express my fears to the high majesty and

* *Sidney Papers*, II. 123. † *Sloane MS.* 4130.

divine oracle from whence I received a doubtful answer." She then proceeds, with vast elaboration of phrase, to implore her Majesty's compassion for her unfortunate brother. All men now, she says, take liberty to defame him, "as if his offence was capital, and he so base, dejected a creature, that his life, his love, his service to your beauties and the State, had deserved no absolution after so hard punishment, or so much as to answer in your fair presence. . . . . And I have reason to apprehend, that, if your fair hands do not check the courses of their unbridled hate, their last courses will be his last breath." Even if his life should not fall a sacrifice, still "his blemished reputation must disable him for ever serving again his sacred goddess, whose excellent perfections and beauties will never suffer those fair eyes to behold so far from compassion." At the least, "if he may not return to the happiness of his former service, to live at the feet of his admired mistress," she entreats that he may be allowed to "sit down to a private life without the imputation of infamy, that his posterity may not repent that their fathers were born of so hard a destiny, two of them perishing by being employed in one country," "where," she says, "they would have done you loyal service to the shedding of their last blood, if they had not been wounded to death by faction of them that care not on whose necks they unjustly build the walls of their own fortunes." Lastly, her Majesty is reminded that out of her princely nature it must needs appear "that mercy is not far from such beauty;" and she is entreated that her divine power be no more eclipsed than her beauty, "which hath shined

throughout all the world." "With this humble request," concludes the epistle, "I presume to kiss your sacred hand, vowing the obedience of endless love. PENELOPE RICH."

This letter is probably genuine. Her Ladyship had lived much with men of poetical and eloquent fancy; and its artificial and high-flown style is not unlike an ambitious attempt on the part of an imperfectly educated person to imitate the rich and passionate writing of Sidney and Essex,—coming a good deal nearer, however, to the decorative manner of the one than to the more simple force and felicity of the other. Her present lover, Montjoy, too, was of a very rhetorical turn. This is, then, "that piquant letter," of which mention is made by Bacon, in a letter written by him for his brother Anthony to Essex, while he still lay in confinement. Bacon there seems to state that it was chiefly the effect, or apprehended effect, of this his sister's letter upon the public mind that made her Majesty resolve to have Essex brought up before the Lords of the Council at York-House, as he was on the 5th of June, and heard in his own defence. We have seen that Lady Rich was not long restrained from going abroad, or at least from leaving town. In the first week of March, we find it stated that she had come to Essex-House; and on the 29th of that month White mentions that she and Lady Southampton were gone to her husband's seat at Lees in Essex.

We are not to suppose, from Bacon's epithet, that Lady Rich's letter was by any means intended as a piece of satire on Elizabeth, or was so taken. The style

was only that in which her Majesty was accustomed to be addressed in her old age. Raleigh's letter to Robert Cecil, written in July, 1592, while he lay in durance for his amour with Elizabeth Throgmorton, is well known. "My heart," he says, "was never broken till this day, that I hear the Queen goes away so far off, whom I have followed so many years, with so great love and desire, in so many journeys, and am now left behind her in a dark prison all alone. . . .. . I, that was wont to behold her riding like Alexander, hunting like Diana, walking like Venus, the gentle wind blowing her fair hair about her pure cheeks like a nymph, sometime singing like an angel, sometime playing like Orpheus; behold the sorrow of this world! once amiss hath bereaved me of all." * At this time Elizabeth was in her sixtieth year. Nearly four years later, on the 3rd of February, 1596, Sir Henry Unton, her ambassador in France, gives the following account, in a letter to her Majesty herself, of an interview he had with Henry the Fourth, at the commencement of which the royal mistress, Madame de Monceaux, had been present:— "Afterwards he also withdrew himself, requiring me to follow him into his chamber, where in a private place, between his bed and the wall, he asked me how I liked his mistress, and whether I found her anything changed. I answered sparingly in her praise, and told him, that, if without offence I might speak it, that I had the picture of a far more excellent mistress, and yet did her picture come far short of her perfection of beauty. As you love me, said he, shew it me, if you have it about

* *Murdin*, 657. (From the original).

you. I made some difficulties; yet, upon his importunity, offered it to his view very secretly, holding it still in my hand. He beheld it with passion and admiration, saying that I had reason, . . . protesting that he had never seen the like; so, with great reverence, he kissed it twice or thrice, I detaining it still in my hand. In the end, with some kind of contention, he took it from me, vowing that I might take my leave of it, for he would not forego it for any treasure, and that to possess the favour of the lively [living] picture he would forsake all the world and hold himself most happy, with many other most passionate words. . . . . I found that the dumb picture did draw on more speech and affection from him than all my best arguments and eloquence." * And more than six years after this, in July, 1602, when she was in her seventieth year, we have Montjoy concluding a long dispatch from Ireland in the following strain:—"Dear Lady, since all the world are slaves as well to your fortune as to your beauty, I have only chosen to profess my love in the unsuspected language of faithful labours, dangers, and sufferings," &c.† Nearly down to this date Elizabeth affected to preserve the habits of a young woman. "Her Majesty is very well," White writes from Court on the 12th of May, 1600; "this day she appoints to see a Frenchman do feats upon a rope in the Conduit Court. To-morrow she hath commanded the bears, the bull, and the ape to be baited in the Tilt-yard. Upon Wednesday she will have solemn dancing." In this solemn or formal dancing her Majesty not unfrequently took part even in

* *Murdin*, 719. (From the original). † *Brewer*, II. 38.

the last years of her life, as she also continued to do in more violent exercises. In August, 1600, we find White recording that at Nonsuch she then went abroad every day to ride and hunt. On the 1st of September he writes from Oatlands:—"The Court is now given to hunting and sports, and the Lords some are gone one way, some another; upon Thursday her Majesty dines and hunts at Hanworth Park; upon Tuesday she dines at Mr. Drake's; and this day she hunts in the New Lodge, in the Forest. God be thanked, she is very merry and well." And again on the 12th, "Her Majesty is very well, and excellently disposed to hunting; for every second day she is on horseback, and continues the sport long." It was about two years before her death that a distinguished Italian nobleman, the Duke of Bracciano, visited England after having witnessed in France the marriage of his cousin Marie de' Medici to Henry the Fourth. "The Duke," Bishop Goodman relates, "as the fashion was, came to the Court upon a Sunday, to see the Queen go to the Chapel. The Queen having notice of this, and knowing him by one that stood next to him, as she came by took some occasion to call the Lord Chamberlain, as I take it, to tie her shoe-strings, or to do some such like office; and, there making a stay, she took the Duke by the hand, who followed her into the privy chamber. She did then graciously use him, and after feasted him, and gave him great entertainment, which was very well taken by the French King and Queen; and then did the Queen dance a galliard very comely and like herself, to shew the vigour of her old age. . . . Even the

Italians did then say that it was a wonder to see an old woman, the head of the Church, being seventy years of age, to dance in that manner, and to perform her part so well." *. Even within a year of her death, we find the French ambassador, the Count de Beaumont, relating that at a banquet which she had given to the Duke de Nevers at Richmond, she opened the ball with the Duke after dinner in a galliard, which, it is added, she danced with wonderful agility for her age. This was in April, 1602. In a subsequent dispatch he reports, that, when he told her of his master Henry the Fourth's sufferings from the gout, she observed that "that was a complaint much better suited to the Pope and the Emperor, who lived constantly shut up in great repose, than to the King of France, who loved bodily exercises, the chace, and war." † When she was ten or twelve years younger, she continued to dance at a rate that has been rarely outdone or matched by five-and-twenty. "My Lord," one of Lord Talbot's Court correspondents writes to him in December, 1589, "the Queen is so well as, I assure you, six or seven galliards in a morning, besides music and singing, is her ordinary exercise." ‡

To return, however, to Lady Rich. At the end of May she was still in the country, though she appears to have removed from Lees to some place on the river. On the 26th of that month White writes,—"This morning my Lord Herbert and Sir Charles Danvers have taken water and gone to see my Lady Rich and Lady Southampton, almost as far as Gravesend; it will

* *Memoirs*, 18. † *Von Raumer*, II. 180. ‡ *Lodge*, II, 386.

be Thursday [the 29th] or they return." But either she had been all this while under superintendance, or her freedom of movement was soon again put a stop to. On the 12th of July White says he has heard that she is not at liberty to go where she will, but that now she makes suit she may be. On the 27th he writes:—"My Lady Rich, I hear, is appointed to be before the Lords." On the 23d of August he writes from Nonsuch, that my Lady Rich still continued under command, and lived at St. Bartholomew's.* A few days after this, however, Essex obtained his liberty; and then, probably, his sister also was allowed to go at large. On the 12th of September White reports her as being at Lees with her Lord, who was "extreme sick and in danger." His Lordship, however, did not die. On the 30th of this month Lord Lumley writes to the Earl of Shrewsbury from Nonsuch:—"My Lord of Southampton is returned out of the Low Countries, and is with his Lady at my Lord Rich's in Essex."† Of Lady Rich we hear no more till we find her, four months after, with her brother in Essex House on the day of his fatal outbreak.

On that memorable Sunday night, in the height and

* In the letter as printed, the expression is, "continues here under command." But St. Bartholomew's was Lord Rich's town house. His ancestor the Chancellor, in requital of his reforming and confiscating zeal, had obtained from Henry the Eighth a grant of the dissolved Priory of St. Bartholomew, including, not only the site of the present hospital, but the surrounding district to a considerable extent. The lucky spoliator and his descendants fixed their residence in a mansion in one of the adjoining closes; the same, I suppose, which Mr. Brayley, in his *Londiniana* describes, as, at the time when he wrote, (in 1829), occupied by a cloth-dealer.

† *Lodge*, II. 545.

crisis of the confusion and terror, Essex parted from her and his wife, in the manner that has been already related, never to meet either again on this side the grave. But the wretched man did not altogether forget his sister in the flowing talk about his late followers and associates with which he indulged himself before leaving the world. "Thus he did begin with us," writes Nottingham in his account to Montjoy of the interview he and Cecil had with him;—"I do humbly thank her Majesty that it hath pleased her to send you two unto me; and you are both most heartily welcome; and, above all things, I am most bound unto her Majesty that it hath pleased her to let me have this little man, Mr. Ashton, my minister, with me for my soul. For, said he, this man in a few hours hath made me know my sins unto her Majesty, and to my God. And [I] must confess to you that I am the greatest, the most vilest, and most unthankfulest traitor that ever was born in this kind. And, therefore, if it shall please you, I will deliver now the truth, though yesterday at the bar, like a most sinful wretch, with countenance and words I maintained all falsehood." He then proceeded to relate everything that had been advised or suggested, in regard to his late attempt, by Southampton, Danvers, Davis, Cuff, Blount, and others. "He spared none of these," Nottingham continues, "to let us know how continually they laboured him about it. And now, said he, I must accuse one who is most nearest to me, my sister, who did continually urge me on with telling me how all my friends and followers thought me a coward, and that I had lost all my valour.

And then thus [that is, and then Essex added], that she must be looked to, for she had a proud spirit; and spared not to say something of her affection for you."

"Would your lordship," says Nottingham, "have thought this weakness and this unnaturalness in this man? This moved her Majesty to think fit that she should be committed, and appointed me to that pleasing office. I did obey her as it became me, and sent her to Mr. H. Lakford's house, where she remained till she was examined by myself and Mr.* Secretary. She used herself with that modesty and wisdom, as, the report being made unto her Majesty, she was presently set at liberty, and sent unto my Lord her husband." †

It is probable, nevertheless, that Essex's accusation of his sister was in the main true.‡ He may, in the excitement of this operation of disburthening his conscience, which he set himself to with so much energy, have taken a somewhat inflamed view of what she had said to him at various times; nor is it necessary to suppose,

* Misprinted, if not mis-written, "her." † *Brewer*, 17.

‡ We have a slight trace of her activity on the morning of the fatal Sunday, in a Letter to the Lords of the Council from the Earl of Bedford (Edward the third Earl), who, like several other persons, had been called upon or had deemed it expedient to give an account of what he had been about throughout that day. He therein states that after ten o'clock prayers, and sermon begun, the Lady Rich came to his house, and told him that the Earl of Essex desired to speak with him; upon which he went with her in her coach, none of the family following him out of the sermon room, and he going unknown to his family. They got to Essex House about eleven o'clock; but Bedford declares that, when shortly after Essex and others of his company drew themselves into secret conference, he was not asked to join them. When they got out of doors, he took an opportunity of giving them the slip at a cross street, and forthwith went and presented himself at the Court. (Copy by Birch, in *Add. MS.* 4160.)

that she was distinctly aware of what he intended to do. Indeed, the precise nature of his project was hardly known to himself till he attempted to put it in execution. But Lady Rich, not one of the wisest of her sex, was evidently a woman of abundant spirit; and, while her admiration of her brother was intense, there were many things, wrongs of her family and wrongs of her own, to make her feel vindictively towards Elizabeth. We cannot doubt that, if Essex had succeeded in bringing his haughty royal mistress to his feet (but she would have let them hew her down first), the Lady Rich was not the person who would have the least enjoyed that triumph. But that his dying charge against his sister was true is no vindication of Essex for making it. Rather the reverse. It was the more likely to destroy her.*

* These furious religious fits of Essex's exhibit him sometimes in a rich light of inconsistency. The following relation is preserved by Bishop Goodman :—"When the Earl fell out of the Queen's favour, and began to be sick at his own house, Dr. Overall, afterwards Bishop of Norwich, having been his tutor in Trinity College, in Cambridge, went to visit him. To whom the Earl made a great complaint of his miserable condition at that time; that he was fallen out of the Queen's favour, poor in his estate, troubled and sick of the Irish disease; all which he did acknowledge to be God's just judgments for his sins, and thought he had offended God in nothing so much as in the not due observing of the Sabbath. And hereupon he asked him this question, Whether a man might use any lawful recreation upon the Sabbath after evening prayer? To whom the Bishop replied, that he thought he might, and showed him the example of all other Reformed Churches, as Geneva, the Low Countries, and the rest; that it was necessary that both body and mind should have recreation; that a man may be so tedious and worn out in the service of God as that he may not be fit for God's service. Well, quoth the Earl, if it may be so, yet it is safer to forbear; and hereafter I will forbear. And yet, said the Bishop, his rising up in arms against the Queen was upon a Sunday."—*Memoirs*, 170. Essex's *hereafter* in this case was of the shortest. He was, however, perfectly sincere when he pronounced the word.

She, of course, protested her innocence. She wrote to Nottingham upon the subject as follows:—"Worthy Lord, I must humbly entreat you to pardon my importuning you with these lines, since the obligations your favours have laid upon me are so great as they even burthen my soul with thankfulness; and desire to let your Lordship know, that, as my mind hath been long since dedicated to honour you, so hath your late kindness vouchsafed me so much comfort, as the bond is more infinite than I can any way discharge, but only with the true and inviolable love of an obedient friend, which I will rather die than fail of so long as I have breath. For my deserts to him that is gone, it is known that I have been more like a slave than a sister; which proceeded out of my exceeding love rather than his authority. What I have lost or suffered, besides her Majesty's displeasure, I will not mention; yet so strangely have I been wronged, as may well be an argument to make one despise the world, finding the smoke of envy where affection should be clearest. But God pardon such humours, and deal with me as I was free from the love or knowledge of these unruly counsels. And, lastly, I beseech your Lordship to hold me in your precious favour, since you are the person that, above all others, I have reason to honour and respect, both in regard of your own virtues, and your noble kindnesses towards me, who can present you with no merit but my vows to be endlessly your Lordship's most faithful to do you service, PENELOPE RICH.—Your Lordship's noble disposition forceth me to deliver my grief unto you, hearing a report that some of these

malicious tongues have sought to wrong a worthy friend of yours. I know the most of them did hate him for his zealous following the service of her Majesty, and beseech you to pardon my presuming thus much, though I hope his enemies can have no power to harm him." * The person alluded to in this postscript is Montjoy. To him Nottingham forwarded Lady Rich's letter with his own. "I cannot forbear," he said, "after all this unpleasant discourse, but a little to make you afraid with sending you this inclosed, when you consider what a youth I am. Yet this you shall be assured, that I am faithful to my friend; and my Lord Montjoy shall so ever find me." In a previous part of his letter he had said, "I think her Majesty would be most glad to see and look upon your black eyes here, so she were sure you would not look with too much respect of other black eyes. But, for that, if the Admiral [Nottingham himself, now between sixty and seventy] were but thirty years old, I think he would not differ in opinion from the Lord Montjoy." † The reader may call to mind poor Sidney's lines,—

> "When Nature made her chief work, Stella's eyes,
> In colour black," &c.

Sir Robert Sidney, his long sought leave having been at last obtained, had returned home in November 1600, —just in time to be employed by the Government, along with Nottingham, in effecting the capture of his relation and intimate friend Essex on the 8th of February following, and thereby to clear away some

* *Brewer*, 20. † *Brewer*, 14—18.

suspicion that had begun to cast its shadow on his own loyalty. With Sidney's arrival in England Rowland White drops his pen as historiographer of the Court. We have, however, one letter more of his, written from Baynard's Castle, the house of the Earl of Pembroke, where he usually resided when in London, on the 28th of December, 1602, and addressed to Sidney at Sir John Harrington's at Exton, in Rutlandshire; and that chances to contain yet another notice of Lady Rich. "The storm," says White, speaking evidently of some high wind of royal indignation, "continues now and then; but all depends upon my Lady Rich's being, or not being, amongst you." * So long as Elizabeth lived, therefore, we may infer, her Ladyship continued in hopeless exclusion and disgrace.

But within three months from this date came a new reign. Never before had the peaceful transference of the crown, in the order of regular succession, produced such a change in all things as now took place. The very minds of men seemed universally to take a new nature. What was permanent in the general revolution or awakening was of course to be attributed to other causes,—to the peculiar position and character of the new sovereign, to the new system or spirit of government introduced, to the general and natural progress of opinion and of events. But the first excitement was mainly the consequence of the protracted duration of the preceding reign, and the unaltered and immoveable condition in which Church and State had been maintained in all respects throughout so long a space. People

* *Sidney Papers*, II., 262.

were wearied of the sameness, and impatient for something new,—the more impatient as the prospect of a change drew nearer. Elizabeth's government was not conducted upon what are now called constitutional principles. It was a government having in it a considerable infusion of arbitrary power or despotism. But it was practically, so long as the national mind was disposed to acquiesce in it, an excellent government. It was by far the best that the country enjoyed for nearly another century. It would be monstrous, indeed, to compare with her firm but yet not ungentle nor ungenerous sway, in its combined action and effect upon the happiness and prosperity of the kingdom at home and upon its respectability abroad, any succeeding government down to the Revolution of 1688. The memory or tradition of her time, accordingly, lived in the hearts and in the speech of the people for all that century as of a golden age compared with any days that had since been known. Yet there can be no doubt that in the later years of her reign almost everybody had come to be tired of its lasting so long. James's accession was, rather for this reason than for any distinct anticipations which had been inspired by what was known of himself, one of the most popular in our annals,—almost as much so as that of his grandson Charles II., which also it resembled in the general satisfaction being very short-lived. But to particular individuals it proved a real morning of a new day. The various persons especially, whether they had been ministers of the late Queen like Cecil, or of the number of her courtiers like Robert Carey, or actual opponents

of her government by force of arms, like the partisans of the late Earl of Essex, who had been in previous communication with the new king, and could claim to have been in their various ways the friends and supporters of his title, found his coming a very substantial improvement of their fortunes. Some were elevated to higher honours; others were raised from the dust; others, who had been living under a cloud, were again brought forward into the light. To Essex's friends and connexions, most of all, the new reign made a new world. His attainder was immediately reversed, and his son and two daughters restored in blood. Another Act of Parliament passed at the same time did away in like manner with the forfeiture of the young Earl of Southampton, the companion of his rebellion, who at the death of the Queen still lay in the Tower unexecuted. It was a sudden substitution to all of them of deliverance and the chief favour of the crown for disgrace and impending ruin.

In the general restoration Essex's sister, the *Rialta* of the year 1589, perhaps a main instigator of the Earl's final and more daring attempt, was not forgotten. Among the noble personages selected to proceed to the Scottish border in the beginning of May, there to receive Queen Anne and to conduct her to the English capital, one was the Lady Rich. The royal progress was very deliberate; it was not till Saturday the 25th of June that her Majesty reached Althorpe, whither the famous Countess of Pembroke and Montgomery, then the Lady Anne Clifford and only in her fourteenth year, was the next day, as she has recorded in her

autobiography, brought by her mother to look upon the new Queen. After noting that that Sunday "was kept with great solemnity, there being an infinite number of lords and ladies," the worthy but somewhat stately and self-complacent Countess adds, "Here we saw the Queen's favour to my Lady Hatton and my Lady Cecil; for she showed no favour to the elderly ladies, but to my Lady Rich and such like company." * My Lady Rich is evidently in a fair way of becoming first female favourite at the new Court.

And when she got back to London, she there found another happiness awaiting her. "About this time," Howes, the continuator of Stow, records, under date of May, 1603, "the Honourable Charles Lord Montjoy returned out of Ireland, and with him Hugh O'Neil, Earl of Tyrone. They were both lodged at Wanstead, in Essex, for a season, and then repaired to the Court, where they were honourably received." To none of her servants could the death of Elizabeth have been a greater relief than to Montjoy. We have seen with what reluctance he had gone to Ireland. He had done his business there much more creditably, or more successfully, than any English commander who had preceded him for many years; but he certainly could not have accomplished the pacification of the country so long as her Majesty had lived. She never would have consented to the peace he made with Tyrone; her proud spirit would have granted no terms to that arch-rebel other than those of unconditional submission. But his return to England with his work done, and with his

* Quoted by *Nichols, Progresses of James*, I., 174.

conquered enemy in his train, was by no means all for which Montjoy had reason to be thankful that a new reign had commenced. He too had been implicated in the schemes of his friend Essex; he had, of course, had nothing to do with the sudden, almost unpremeditated attempt in which the conspiracy actually exploded; but he had certainly at one time agreed to join the Earl in some plan for coercing the government by force. Nottingham, in writing to Montjoy, delicately avoids that part of the subject; but Essex had himself, in his confession, particularly named Montjoy as having been privy to his design. Sir Charles Danvers had made a more precise or more detailed revelation. According to his statement, Montjoy, after he had gone to Ireland, had promised that, if the king of Scots would enter into the plan, he would leave that kingdom defensively guarded and come over to England with five or six thousand men; "which, with the party that my Lord of Essex should make head withal, were thought sufficient to bring that to pass that was intended." He had afterwards, indeed, Danvers said, drawn back, advising the Earl to have patience and endeavour to recover her Majesty's favour by ordinary courses.* We have it on the testimony of Fynes Moryson, his secretary, that Montjoy was not a little alarmed when he heard of Essex's apprehension. It was on the 22nd of February, while he lay at Mac Geoghan's castle of Dunoar, in West Meath, that he received a packet from England conveying this news. It "much dismayed him and his nearest friends," says Moryson, "and

* *Birch*, II. 470—473.

wrought strange alteration in him; for, whereas before he stood upon terms of honour with the Secretary [Cecil], now he fell flat to the ground, and insinuated himself into inward love, and to an absolute dependency with the Secretary, so as for a time he estranged himself from two of his nearest friends for the open declaration they had made of dependency on the Earl of Essex; yet rather covering than extinguishing his good affection towards them." He also, the next day, took his more secret papers out of Moryson's hands, and locked them up in his own cabinet. Moryson intimates, that he never regained the footing on which he had previously stood with Montjoy. "In truth," he adds, "his Lordship had good cause to be wary in his words and actions, since, by some confessions in England, himself was tainted with privity to the Earl's practices; so that, howsoever he continued still to importune leave to come over, yet no doubt he meant nothing less, but rather, if he had been sent for, was purposed, with his said friends, to sail into France, they having privately fitted themselves with money and necessaries thereunto."*

Instead of a flight to France, Montjoy now returned home to England in triumph, and to be rewarded with all the honours the crown could bestow. He retained the government of Ireland with his title of Lord Deputy raised to that of Lord Lieutenant. Immediately upon his coming over he was sworn of the English Privy Council. And, on the 21st of July, he was created Earl of Devonshire, "in the Great Hall at Hampton Court,

* *Itinerary, Book* II.

by the King's Majesty under his estate, and the Queen present."* On the 3rd of September he was appointed Master of the Ordnance. He had been made a Knight of the Garter by Elizabeth, in 1597.

Meanwhile, the Lady Rich, in her department, also went on prospering. On the 2nd of July the Feast of the Garter was held at Windsor, when the young Prince Henry was installed a Knight of the Order: "The same time," says the Chronicler, "the great ladies of England, in honour of the Queen, and discharge of their duties, came to the Court to perform their homage unto her Highness, who, with great reverence kneeling, one by one kissed her Majesty's hand, being hard to discover whether the mildness of the Sovereign or humility of the subject was greatest."* Of these great ladies, of such exemplary humility of demeanour, the Lady Rich was one. She was also, there can be little doubt, one of the eleven Ladies of Honour who along with her Majesty performed Samuel Daniel's Masque of *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses*, represented at Hampton Court on Sunday the 8th of January, 1604. But we have not the copy of the printed book which the Earl of Worcester, having bought it for sixpence, sent to his friend, Lord Shrewsbury and on which, he says, he had marked the names of the ladies who personated the several divinities. "This day," he subjoins in his letter, which is dated the 2nd of February, "the King dined abroad with the Florentine Ambassador, who taketh now his leave very shortly; he was with the King at the play at night, and supped with my Lady

* *Howes.*

Rich in her chamber." Afterwards his Lordship goes on: "You must know we have ladies of divers degrees of favour; some for the private chamber, some for the drawing-chamber, some for the bedchamber." Lady Rich he mentions among those for the drawing-chamber.* In the same letter Worcester reports that on the 15th of March their Majesties are to pass through London from the Tower to Whitehall, when "the great ladies are appointed to ride in chariots, the baronesses on horseback, and they that have no saddles from the King must provide of their own;" the number provided by the King being only twenty, all of crimson velvet. In this triumphant procession the great ladies who followed next after their Majesties were the Lady Arabella—the Countess of Oxford—the Countess of Northumberland—the Countess of Shrewsbury—the Lady Rich, "by especial commandment." † But the most famous of these Court shows in which the Lady Rich is recorded to have taken part is that of Ben Jonson's *Masque of Blackness*, which was represented in the Banquetting House at Whitehall on the 6th of January (Twelfth Night), 1605. Great preparation had been making for this exhibition for a month before, and the excitement among the Court ladies was extreme, as we learn by a letter of the 12th of December from Mr. John Packer, one of Winwood's court correspondents, in which, after enumerating the ladies who were to act with her Majesty, he proceeds;—"But the Lady of Northumberland is excused by sickness, Lady Hertford by the measles, Lady of Nottingham hath the polypus

* *Lodge*, III. 88. † *Nichols, Progresses of James*, I. 324.

in her nostril, which some fear must be cut off. The Lady Hatton [now the wife of Coke] would fain have a part, but some unknown reason kept her out; whereupon she is gone to her house, and will not let her Mr. Attorney be either with her or within her chamber, *quelque grande envie qu'il en aie*, till he have performed all covenants made to her at her marriage." * The twelve ladies were twelve nymphs, daughters of the river-god Niger, and all negresses. Jonson's own description is very gorgeous;—"The Masquers were placed in a great concave shell, like mother of pearl, curiously made to move on those waters, and rise with the billow; the top thereof was stuck with a chevron of lights, which, indented to the proportion of the shell, struck a glorious beam upon them, as they were seated one above another; so that they were all seen, but in an extravagant order." Each nymph was attended by an ocean girl, black like herself, as her light-bearer. "The attire of the masquers," Jonson goes on, "all alike in all, without difference; the colours azure and silver; but returned on the top with a scroll and antique dressing of feathers and jewels interlaced with ropes of pearl. And for the front, ear, neck, and wrists the ornament was of the most choice and orient pearl; best setting off from the black." They were arranged in pairs. With the Queen on the foremost and lowest seat sat the Countess of Bedford; they bore the names of Euphoris and Aglaia, and were distinguished by the symbol of "A Golden Tree, laden with Fruit." Two other nymphs, Ocyte and Kathare (*Swiftfoot* and

* *Memorials*

*Pureheart*), with "A pair of naked feet in a river" for their cognizance, were represented by the Lady Rich and the Countess of Suffolk (formerly married to a brother of Lord Rich). The mingled black and white must have been sufficiently striking and dazzling; yet the effect was not satisfactory. So at least thought Sir Dudley Carleton, who in a letter to Winwood written a few days after thus audaciously criticises the discoloured ladies; —"Their apparel was rich, but too light and courtezan-like for such great ones. Instead of vizards, their faces and arms, up to the elbows, were painted black, which was disguise sufficient, for they were hard to be known; but it became them nothing so well as their own red and white, and you cannot imagine a more ugly sight than a troop of lean-cheeked Moors." *

This, however, was probably the last occasion of the kind which the Lady Rich graced with her brilliant presence. Before another Twelfth Night came round she had ceased to be a star in that sphere. Strange as it may be thought, her open connexion with Montjoy (or the Earl of Devonshire as he was now called), with whom she appears to have lived ever since his return from Ireland, does not seem to have hitherto at all affected her position either at Court or in general society. We have seen how she continues to mix with the greatest in the land, and to move in the highest orbit of honour and distinction. People, apparently, treated her case, by general consent, as a peculiar and exceptional one, and agreed not to see its violation of the common rule. But now a course was taken which

* *Memorials.*

in a moment changed all this. By an amicable arrangement among the several parties concerned a judgment was obtained from the ecclesiastical court which divorced her from Lord Rich, upon which she was immediately married by the Earl of Devonshire. The marriage was solemnised at Wanstead House on the 26th of December, 1605, by William Laud, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, who was the Earl's chaplain.

It appears from Laud's Diary that he had been appointed Chaplain to Devonshire about two years before this, on the 3d of September 1603. He has recorded his compliance with the demand of his patron in that curious register as follows:—"My cross about the Earl of Devon's marriage, Decem. 26, 1605. *Die Jovis*" (Thursday). It was a costly, and had nearly proved a fatal, morning's work for the future prelate and primate, having for a long time threatened to bar him for ever from the episcopal bench. It was only with great difficulty that about sixteen years afterwards the King consented to give him his first mitre, that of St. David's. "It was an observation," says Archbishop Abbot, speaking of Laud, in his *Narrative* respecting his own disgrace, "what a sweet man this was like to be, that the first observable act that he did was the marrying of the Earl of Devonshire to the Lady Rich when it was notorious to the world that she had another husband, and the same a nobleman, who had divers children, then living, by her. King James did for many years take this so ill, that he would never hear of any great preferment of him, insomuch that the

Bishop of Lincoln, Dr. Williams, who taketh upon him to be the first promoter of him, hath many times said, that, when he made mention of Laud to the King, his Majesty was so averse from it, that he was constrained oftentimes to say that he would never desire to serve that master which could not remit one fault unto his servant." * As Williams's biographer, Bishop Hacket, tells the story, when the see of St. David's became vacant in 1621, Laud was, from his learning and general reputation, considered as having the best claim to be nominated to it; and he had, besides, "fastened on the Lord Marquess [Buckingham] to be his mediator, whom he had made sure of by great observances." He was strongly opposed, however, by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Abbot, who objected to the soundness of his theology. Buckingham, therefore, who, says Hacket, "as his intimates know, was not wont to let a suit fall which he had undertaken," applied to Williams, then Lord Keeper, "to commend Dr. Laud strenuously and importunately to the King's good opinion, to fear no offence, neither to desist for a little storm." Williams, accordingly, "watched when the King's affections were most still and pacificous," and then began the attack. "Well," said the King, "I perceive whose attorney you are; Stenny [his Majesty's pet name for Buckingham] hath set you on. You have pleaded the man a good Protestant, and I believe it; neither did that stick in my breast when I stopt his promotion. But was there not a certain Lady that forsook her husband, and married a Lord that was

* *Rushworth*, I. 440.

her paramour? Who knit that knot? Shall I make a man a prelate, one of the angels of my Church, who hath a flagrant crime upon him?—Sir, says the Lord Keeper, very boldly, you are a good master, but who dare serve you if you will not pardon one fault, though of a scandalous size, to him that is heartily penitent for it? I pawn my faith to you that he is heartily penitent; and there is no other blot that hath sullied his good name." In the end James gave in upon this point. "You press well," he replied, when Williams had concluded his pleading, "and I hear you with patience; neither will I revive a trespass any more which repentance hath mortified and buried." He added, however, that the plain truth was, he kept back Laud from all place of rule and authority because he found he had a restless spirit, and could not see when matters were well, but "loved to toss and change, and to bring things to a pitch of reformation floating in his own brain." * Laud got the bishopric. He continued, however, to the end of his life to look upon St. Stephen's day, that of the marriage, as one of the unluckiest in his calendar, and to observe it as a day of fasting and humiliation, with a form of prayer which he composed for the purpose, and which may still be read in Heylin's History of his *Life and Death.*

Heylin, Laud's biographer, proceeding with his blundering story, the commencement of which has been already quoted, tells us that, Montjoy on his return from Ireland, finding Lady Rich to be free from her husband, "legally freed by a divorce, and not a

* *Life of Williams*, 64, 65.

voluntary separation only, *à thoro et mensa*, as they call it, he thought himself obliged to make her some reparation in point of honour by taking her unto his bosom as a lawful wife." It is strange that Heylin should not have known that a separation *à thoro et mensa*, or from bed and board, is the only kind of divorce which the English ecclesiastical courts have ever granted for such a cause as adultery, or any other cause that does not make the marriage null and void from the beginning. He goes on to say that another motive with Montjoy was, that, having had some children by the lady before she was actually separated from the bed of Rich, he conceived he might put them into a capability of legitimation by this subsequent marriage. Accordingly, "he dealt so powerfully with his chaplain," that he prevailed upon him to perform the ceremony. Whatever was the method of powerful dealing which his Lordship employed, this looks as if Laud had gone deliberately into what he did. Indeed Heylin makes him to have carefully inquired into the circumstances of the case before he consented, repeating what he had told us before, that "he found by the averment of the parties that some assurances of marriage had passed between them before she was espoused to Rich," &c.*

But Laud cannot have been imposed upon by that pretence. He was aware, with all the rest of the world, that the lady had been married to and had lived for many years as the wife of Lord Rich; and, even if the previous promises that Heylin dreams of could have been ever so clearly proved (the fact being, that they

* *Cyprianus Anglicus*, 56.

cannot have been so much as alleged), he could never imagine that he was justified, on any such ground as they afforded, in now marrying her to Devonshire. He proceeded, unquestionably, and can only have proceeded, upon the assumption, that she was warranted in contracting a new marriage by the sentence of the ecclesiastical court which had separated her from Rich. The version, indeed, of the history of the law of divorce in England that is commonly given would make it almost impossible that such a notion should have been taken up; but that received account is certainly quite erroneous.*

At all events, the marriage drew forth instantly an outcry of horror and indignation from the quarter in which both parties up to this time had, to all appearance, stood in the highest reputation and favour. Their connexion hitherto had been thought nothing of; but this attempt to legalise it was not to be borne. Formerly it was only a breach of one of the Ten Commandments; now it was a violation of a fundamental principle of James's own theology or church law. It was an outrage and an insult far exceeding any adultery. Poor Lady Rich, till now the light of the Court, stands suddenly forth a detected angel of darkness. His Majesty told Devonshire to his face that he had got "a fair woman with a black soul."† "The Earl," Heylin continues, "found presently such an alteration in the King's countenance towards him, and such a lessening of the value which formerly had been set upon him, that he was put to a necessity of writing an Apology to defend

* See APPENDIX, No. II.

† *Aulicus Coquinariæ*, 201.

his action." This Apology is referred to by several subsequent writers; but it may be doubted if any of them knew more about it than was to be gathered from the slight mention of it by Heylin. None of them seems to have seen it, or to have been aware whether it had ever been printed, or whether it was in existence. There is a manuscript copy of it in the British Museum.* It is entitled "A Discourse of Marriage written by the Earl of Devonshire in Defence of his Marriage with the Lady Rich," and covers twenty-eight closely written folio pages. The Earl's argument, however, is occupied exclusively with the general question, which he discusses with an imposing show of both legal and theological learning, but in a manner profoundly uninteresting to a reader of the present day. Almost the only sentence, perhaps, in the whole dreary disquisition from which the slightest inference could be drawn as to the specialties of his own case is the concluding one, in which, having observed that even in heaven there is pardon for a repenting sinner, he adds:—"What offence should the like indulgence give in a fault of weakness, especially if it fall out that it be not accompanied with any other injury; for, if both parties do desire such a separation, and are content with a new contract, *volenti non fit injuria.*" He contends that, at the worst, his marriage, not being opposed to the word of God, comes within the dispensing power of his Majesty as head of the Church, even if it should be thought to be contrary to law, which, however, he also maintains that it is not.

* *Sloane MS.* 4149.

But there is another paper written by Devonshire which has not been at all noticed, and which is in the highest degree curious, an "Epistle to the King," which had accompanied the *Discourse* when it was submitted to his Majesty. Of this the original is preserved at Lambeth, and there is also a copy in the Museum in the handwriting of Bishop Kennett.* Here the Earl tells his own story distinctly and circumstantially. "Most dear and sacred Master," he begins, "unto whom God hath given wisdom above all that went before you, since it hath pleased you in favour of your poor servant to descend from your higher thoughts of the cedars of Lebanon to speak of the humble hyssop, vouchsafe to look upon this treatise with such an eye as God doth look upon the unworthy oblations of those that love him. It is not enough for me to satisfy mine own conscience, except you be satisfied with the reasons that move me. And therefore I have been led to this with a necessity, and not a desire to write; which I confess is too much for you to read, and yet too little for the matter. I have endeavoured to prove what I do myself believe, that in some cases to dissolve the bond of marriage is neither against the first institution, the laws of nature, nor the law of the Gospel; that the Civil Law and the laws of all nations did allow it; that even the Canon Law doth confess that the contract of marriage during life hath a not expressed condition, *videlicet, si illa vel ille non in legem conjugii peccaverit* [if neither party have offended against the law of marriage]. I have strengthened this with the opinion of

* *Lansdowne MS.* 885.

many of the Fathers, with the practice of the Church, and of all nations till the Canon Law, with some of the censures obnoxious to that law, and with their doctrine in general that did justly forsake the errors and tyranny of those hypocritical laws of chastity, and the law given the whore of Babylon. And next, if the bond be utterly dissolved, that neither party doth injury to any other by contracting anew, nor offence to God, if it be with a mind thereby to serve him and to avoid sin. And, finally, that, if such marriages be not prohibited by the law of God, they are at this time lawful by the law of this land."

Then, after this preface, he proceeds:—"And you, my Lord, who are as an angel of God, and full of power to judge between good and evil, vouchsafe a while to leave your great flock, and hearken with favour unto the particular case of a poor lost sheep. A lady, of great birth and virtue, being in the power of her friends, was by them married, against her will, unto one against whom she did protest at the very solemnity, and ever after; between whom, from the first day, there ensued continual discord, although the same fears that forced her to marry constrained her to live with him. Instead of a comforter, he did study in all things to torment her; and by fear and fraud did practise to deceive her of her dowry; and, though he forbore to offer her any open wrong, restrained with the awe of her brother's powerfulness, yet, as he had not in long time before in the chiefest duty of a husband used her as his wife, so presently after his death he did put her to a stipend, and abandoned her without pretence of any cause but his

own desire to live without her." It was after he had withdrawn himself from her bed for the space of twelve years, that "he did, by persuasions and threatenings, move her to consent unto a divorce, and to confess a fault with a nameless stranger, without the which such a divorce as he desired could not by the laws in practice proceed. Whereupon, to give a form to that separation which was long before in substance made, she was content to subscribe to a confession, of his and her own counsel's making, touching a fault committed before your general pardon, whereupon the sentence of divorce proceeded, with as much rigour as ever was showed to the meanest in the like case."

"Now," the Earl concludes, with a summary of the reasoning in the *Discourse*, "if before God the want of consent doth make a nullity in marriage, and the not performing the duties doth break the conditions of marriage, and that desertion, by Paul's doctrine, doth make the woman free to marry again; and, lastly, if a sentence of divorce be a judicial separation not prohibited by the law of God; this lady remaineth divers ways free from her bond, and free from her sin if she repent; namely, *Impietas impii non nocebit ei in quacunque die conversus fuerit ab impietate sud.* [As for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness.] And you, dear Lord, that in the greatness of your place, but more in your wonderful gifts, resemble God, out of that clemency wherein you imitate him whose mercy doth exceed all his works, lay by the rigour of your judgment, and, as you are both *fidelis et prudens dispensator*

[a faithful and a prudent dispenser], at the least dispense and forgive them, though it were much, seeing they have ever loved you much; and, if in no other fortune, give them leave in their age to live together like poor Baucis and Philemon, who will never entertain any other guest into their hearts but God and you. For me, if the laws of moral honesty, which, in things not prohibited by God, I have ever held inviolable, do only move me now to prefer my own conscience before the opinion of the world, my own better fortunes, or the dear respect to my posterity, do but vouchsafe to think what a servant the same rules of honesty must force me to be unto you, whose merit to me is so infinitely beyond any other, and my love to you so much above the love to a woman as Jonathan's was to David, whom he loved as his own soul."

But Discourse and Epistle, argument and supplication, both "edified" little or nothing, to take Heylin's expression for it, either in Court or country. The sudden fall from honour to contempt broke the poor Earl's heart. He died at the Palace of the Savoy on the 3rd of April 1606, within little more than three months after his marriage. He had only reached the age of forty-three. "The Earl of Devonshire," Chamberlain writes to Winwood on the Saturday, "left this life on Thursday night last, soon and early for his years, but late enough for himself; and happy had he been if he had gone two or three years since, before the world was weary of him, or that he had left that scandal behind him. He was not long sick, past eight or ten days, and died of a burning fever and putrefaction of his lungs,

a defect he never complained of."* His Secretary Moryson records the sad event with more affectionate delicacy. "He was surprised with a burning fever, whereof the first fit being very violent, he called to him his most familiar friends, and, telling them that he had ever by experience and by presaging mind been taught to repute a burning fever his fatal enemy, desired them, upon instructions then given them, to make his will; and then, he said, let death look ever so ugly, he would meet him smiling, which he nobly performed; for I never saw a brave spirit part more mildly from the old mansion than his did, departing most peaceably after nine days' sickness." Elsewhere Moryson says, "Grief of unsuccessful love brought him to his last end."

But some portions at least must also be given of Moryson's most curious full-length delineation of his noble master, when he first introduces him to his readers, as about to assume the conduct of the Irish war. It is probably the most complete description or inventory that was ever drawn up of the peculiarities, moral and physical, internal and external, of a human being.

First, for his person. "He was of stature tall, and of very comely proportion, his skin fair, with little hair on his body, which hair was of colour blackish (or inclining to black), and thin on his head, where he wore it short, except a lock under his left ear, which he nourished the time of this war, and, being woven up, hid it in his neck under his ruff. The crown of his

* *Winwood*, II. 206.

head was in his latter days something bald, as the fore-part naturally curled. He only used the barber for his head; for the hair on his chin (growing slowly), and that on his cheeks and throat, he used almost daily to cut it with his scissars, keeping it so low with his own hand that it could scarce be discerned, as likewise himself kept the hair of his upper lip something short, only suffering that under his nether lip to grow at length and full; yet some two or three years before his death he nourished a sharp and short pike-devant on his chin. His forehead was broad and high; his eyes great, black, and lovely [lively?]; his nose something low and short, and a little blunt in the end; his chin round; his cheeks full, round, and ruddy; his countenance cheerful, and as amiable as ever I beheld of any man; only, some two years before his death, upon discontentment, his face grew thin, his ruddy colour failed, growing somewhat swarthy, and his countenance was sad and dejected. His arms were long and of proportionable bigness; his hands long and white; his fingers great in the end, and his legs somewhat little, which he gartered over above the knee, wearing the Garter of St. George's Order under the left knee, except when he was booted, and so wore not that Garter, but a blue ribbon instead thereof above his knee, and hanging over his boot." As for Devonshire's discontentment and dejection for so long a period as two years before his death, it would have been more intelligible if two *months* had been the space mentioned, and perhaps Moryson, whose book is by no means very correctly printed, may have so written it. We have seen that

Lady Rich, at any rate, was in high favour at Court within a year before their marriage.*

But his Lordship has not yet been more than half set before us, even in his outer man. "The description of his apparel," the graphic Secretary proceeds, "may be thought a needless curiosity, yet must I add some few words thereof, because, having promised the lively portraiture of his body, as well as his mind, the same cannot otherwise be so lively represented to the imagination; besides that by his clothes some disabilities of his body to undertake this hard war may be conjectured, and especially the temper of his mind may be lively shadowed, since the wise man hath taught us that the apparel in some sort shows the man. His apparel in Court and cities was commonly of white or black taffetas or satins, and he wore two yea sometimes three pairs of silk stockings, with black silk grogram clocks guarded, and ruffs of comely depth and thickness (never wearing any falling band), black beaver hats with plain black bands, a taffeta quilted waistcoat in summer, a scarlet waistcoat, and sometimes both, in winter. But in the country, and specially keeping the field in Ireland, yea sometimes in the cities, he wore jerkins and round hose (for he never wore other fashion than round), with laced panes of russet cloth, and cloaks of the same cloth lined with velvet, and white beaver

* Devonshire, as Sir Alexander Croke notes, (*Genealogical History* II. 238), had been appointed a Commissioner to negotiate a treaty of peace with Spain in 1604; and he was also one of the Commissioners before whom Fawkes and his associates in the Gunpowder Plot were tried in Westminster Hall on the 27th of January, 1606, which was some weeks after his marriage.

hats with plain bands. And, besides his ordinary stockings of silk, he wore, under boots, another pair of woollen or worsted, with a pair of high linen boot hose; yea, three waistcoats in cold weather, and a thick ruff, besides a russet scarf about his neck thrice folded under it; so as I never observed any of his age and strength to keep his body so warm. He was very comely in all his apparel, but the robes of St. George's Order became him extraordinarily well." There is a full length mezzotint of him in the robes of the Order by Valentine Green, from a picture by Vansomer.

Moryson proceeds:—"For his diet, he used to fare plentifully and of the best; and, as his means increased, so his table was better served, so that in his latter time no lord in England might compare with him in that kind of bounty. Before these wars he used to have nourishing breakfasts, as ponadoes [panados?] and broths; but in the time of the war he used commonly to break his fast with a dry crust of bread, and in the spring-time with butter and sage, with a cup of stale beer, wherewith sometimes in winter he would have sugar and nutmeg mixed. He fed plentifully both at dinner and supper, having the choicest and most nourishing meats, with the best wines, which he drunk plentifully, but never in great excess; and in his latter years, (especially in the time of the war, as well when his night-sleeps were broken, as at other times upon full diet) he used to sleep in the afternoons, and that long, and upon his bed. He took tobacco abundantly, and of the best, which I think preserved him from sickness, especially in Ireland, where the foggy air of

the bogs, and waterish fowl, plenty of fish, and generally all meats with the common sort always unsalted and green-roasted, do most prejudice the health; for he was very seldom sick, only he was troubled with the headache, which duly and constantly, like an ague, for many years, till his death, took him once every three months, and vehemently held him some three days; and himself in good part attributed as well the reducing of this pain to these certain and distant times as the ease he therein found to the virtue of this herb. He was very neat, loving cleanliness both in apparel and diet." . . . . . .

What follows will better admit of some abridgment. Montjoy's somewhat luxurious way of living had, it seems, got to be talked of before the Irish war, so that, when Tyrone heard of his coming over, he jestingly remarked that the moment of action would be past before the new Lord Deputy could any morning make himself ready and get through his breakfast. "But by woeful experience," says Moryson, "he found this jesting to be the laughter of Solomon's fool." "His behaviour," our author goes on, "was courtly, grave, and exceeding comely, especially in actions of solemn pomps. In his nature, he loved private retiredness, with good fare, and some few choice friends. He delighted in study, in gardens, an house richly furnished and delectable for rooms of retreat, in riding on a pad to take the air, in playing at shuffle-board or at cards, in reading play-books for recreation, and especially in fishing and fish-ponds, seldom using any other exercises. . . . . He much affected glory and honour, . . . . being

also frugal in gathering and saving, which in his latter days declined to vice, rather in greedy gathering than in restraining his former bounties of expense . . . . Touching his affecting honour and glory, I may not omit that his most familiar friends must needs observe the discourses of his Irish actions to have been extraordinarily pleasing to him; so that, howsoever he was not prone to hold discourses with ladies, yet I have observed him more willingly drawn to those of this nature, with which the Irish ladies entertained him, than into any other." . . . .

Having observed that he had the necessary faculty of a good captain, skill in handling his pen as well as his sword, so that what he ably performed he could as effectually set forth, the flowing Secretary next takes up his intellectual powers and acquisitions. "He came young," he says, "and not well grounded from Oxford University; but in his youth at London he so spent his vacant hours with scholars best able to direct him, as, besides his reading in histories, skill in tongues (so far as he could read and understand the Italian and French, though he durst not adventure to speak them), and so much knowledge, at least, in cosmography and the mathematics as might serve his own ends, he had taken such pains in the search of natural philosophy, as, in divers arguments of that nature held by him with scholars, I have often heard him, not without marvelling at his memory and judgment, to remember of himself the most material points, the subtilest objections, and the soundest answers. But his chief delight was in the study of Divinity, and more especially in reading of the

Fathers and Schoolmen." He had been in his youth inclined to Popery, but had been made a confirmed disciple of the Reformed Faith by his own theological investigations. "And I will be bold to say," continues Moryson, "he was, in my judgment, the best divine I ever heard argue, especially for disputing against the Papists, out of the Fathers, Schoolmen, and, above all, out of the written word (whereof some chapters were each night read to him, besides his never intermitted prayers at morning and night). Insomuch as I have often heard him, with strange felicity of memory and judgment, discover the Papists' false allegings of the Fathers and texts, or additions and omissions in them, and to urge arguments strongly, and (as much as beseemed him) scholarlike, as well in discourses with Jesuits and Priests in Ireland (more especially at Waterford, where he made the very seduced Irish ashamed of them), as upon divers occasions with other Papists his friends."

His Lordship's triumphant performance in this line at Waterford is related by Moryson in another place. Having beaten and driven out the Spaniards, and also reduced Tyrone to submission, he approached that city in the beginning of May, 1603. At first the citizens would consent to admit only himself and his retinue; but they were induced, on his promise of a safe conduct, to allow "one Dr. White, a Jesuit, the chief seducer of them by seditious sermons," to visit the camp. White presented himself, accompanied by a young Dominican Friar;—"but when they foolishly carried a crucifix," continues our author,

"openly showing the same, the soldiers were hardly kept from offering them violence; and, when they put up the crucifix in their pockets, yet could hardly endure the sight of their habits, which each wore according to his order, Dr. White wearing a black gown and cornered cap, and the friar wearing a white woollen frock. White, being come into his Lordship's tent, was bold to maintain erroneous and dangerous positions, for maintenance of that which the citizens had done in the reforming of religion without public authority; all which his Lordship did (as no layman, I think, could better do) most learnedly confute. And, when White cited a place in St. Austin for his proof, his Lordship, having the book in his tent, showed all the company that he had falsely cited that Father; for, howsoever his very words were found there, yet they were set down by way of an assertion which St. Austin confuted in the discourse following. At this surprisal White was somewhat out of countenance, and the citizens ashamed." Montjoy may be safely pronounced to have been the last commander of an army who carried about with him in his campaigns a copy of any of the works of St. Augustine.

Moryson further describes him as a close concealer of his secrets, and as sparing in speech, "though, when drawn to it, most judicious therein, if not eloquent." He adds, "He never used swearing, but rather hated it, which I have seen him often controul at his table with a frowning brow and an angry cast of his black eye." He was slow to anger, we are told, "yet, once provoked, spoke home;" a gentle enemy; and, as a friend, "if not cold, yet not to be used much out of the

highway." "To his servants," it is added, "he was mild, seldom reproving them, and never with ill words. . . . I cannot say that he was bountiful to them. . . . . His gifts to them were rare and sparing; . . . yet . . at his death he gave £1000 by will to be divided by his executors' discretion among them. . . . . He kept his word in public affairs inviolably, without which he could never have been trusted of the Irish; but otherwise in his promises he was dilatory and doubtful, so as in all events he was not without an evasion. Lastly, in his love to women . . . . he was faithful and constant, if not transported with self-love more than the object, and therein obstinate."

Altogether, the character, as drawn by the worthy Secretary, though with many good points, is one of considerable selfishness—requiring all the ability, valour, and religion with which he relieves its egotism to make it respectable. But such minute and searching dissection as has been applied in this case is too much for human nature. It goes far beyond the familiar and intimate observation of the most penetrating valet, and could scarcely fail to bring out some littlenesses in any heroism. With all his professed admiration, too, a grain or two of dislike, not to say spite, may perhaps be detected in Moryson's elaborate celebration of his old master. He seems never to have quite forgiven or forgotten Montjoy's taking his more confidential correspondence into his own hands after Essex's catastrophe. At the least, there is pretty evidently some natural ambition to make

a display of his own skill as a moral painter in the distribution of his lights and shades. In the most remarkable act of his life, his marriage with Lady Rich, the Earl may have committed a mistake; he may have misinterpreted both the law of man and the law of God; but surely his conduct must be allowed to have been both conscientious and courageous. In making the divorced lady his wife, he did his utmost, at least, to discharge whatever claim she may have had upon him, and also what he owed to the children she had borne him; and that without regard to the opinion of the world, and at a hazard which could not but appear in the highest degree formidable, and which in fact proved fatal, to his own fortunes. The whole proceeding seems to demonstrate both his earnest anxiety to act rightly, and his resolution in so acting, to the extent of his discernment, without minding consequences.

The Earl had a magnificent funeral, and was interred in St. Paul's Chapel, in Westminster Abbey. The same year appeared from the press a ponderous poetical performance, bearing the title of "Fame's Memorial, or the Earl of Devonshire deceased; with his honourable Life, peaceful End, and solemn Funeral,"—the first publication of John Ford, the distinguished dramatic writer. "Fame's Memorial" gives little promise of the powers which its author afterwards displayed. The poem is introduced by a dedication in prose "To the rightly Right Honourable Lady, the Lady Penelope, Countess of Devonshire," whom the Earl, it is observed, had, whilst he lived, endowed, and justly endowed, "with all the principles of his sincerest heart and best

fortunes." It is not known that Ford had ever been connected with the deceased nobleman; yet he speaks of his own particular grief for his loss. To the Countess, however, as he calls her, he describes himself as being "a mere stranger and altogether unknown." A laborious acrostic on the words *Penelope Contes of Devonshire* follows; and then comes the poem, which extends to above a thousand lines. After a languid and tedious deduction of the course of the Earl's military life, in which, by the bye, as well as in Daniel's poem already mentioned, his participation in "the wars of Belgia" is not forgotten, we have the subject of his marriage thus brought forward, with the frankest recognition of the peculiar nature of the case:—

"Linked in the graceful bonds of dearest life,
Unjustly termed disgraceful, he enjoyed
Content's abundance; happiness was rife,
Pleasure secure; no troubled thought annoyed
His comforts sweet; toil was in toil destroyed;
Maugre the throat of malice, spite of spite,
He lived united to his heart's delight:

"His heart's delight, who was the beauteous star
Which beautified the value of our land,
The lights of whose perfections brighter are
Than all the lamps which in the lustre stand
Of heaven's forehead, by discretion scanned;
Wit's ornament, earth's love, love's paradise,
A saint divine, a beauty fairly wise:

"A beauty fairly wise, wisely discreet
In winking mildly at the tongue of rumour;
A saint merely divine, divinely sweet
In banishing the pride of idle humour;
Not relishing the vanity of tumour,
More than to a female of so high a race;
With meekness bearing sorrow's sad disgrace."

A subsequent stanza further likens "this heart-stealing goddess" to a nightingale amid a quire of other song-birds, as she charms all ears to listen to "her fluent wit," and makes all other talkers blush at their own.

Mention, nevertheless, is also made of the Earl being pursued by the maledictions of hatred and envy. The allusion here does not seem to be exclusively to the outcry his marriage had produced. In one place what is said would almost lead us to think that he had been assailed by some species of professional libellers or scandal-mongers:—

> "Thus, loving all, he lived beloved of all,
> Save some whom emulation did enrage
> To spit the venom of their rancour's gall,
> Which dropped upon themselves, and made the stage
> A public theatre for folly's badge:
> Their shame will still outlive their memory,
> Only remember-ed in infamy."

After which follows a defiance, "Let ballad-rhymers tire their galled wits,"—and so forth.

It is intimated by Ford that the Earl was distinguished for his patronage of literature; and Daniel in his poem speaks of him as having been the great patron of his Muse, and declares that the verse, which in his lifetime the Earl had graced, shall now do honour to his memory. Yet, he adds,

> ——"I stand clear from any other chain
> Than of my love, which, free-born, draws free breath:
> The benefit thou gav'st me to sustain
> My humble life, I lose it by thy death.
> Nor was it such as it could lay on me
> Any exaction of respect so strong
> As to enforce my observance beyond thee,
> Or make my conscience differ from my tongue."

Daniel, it thus appears, had received a small pension from the Earl. His delineation of his patron accords on the whole very well with Moryson's, though, partly perhaps from the dignity of the poetical style, as well as from its being less particular, it sets him before us in a more imposing attitude. Daniel highly extols his Lordship's studious habits :—

> "Witness so many volumes, whereto thou
> Hast set thy notes under thy learned hand,
> And marked them with that print as will show how
> The point of thy conceiving thoughts did stand ;
> That none would think, if all thy life had been
> Turned into leisure, thou could'st have attained
> So much of time to have perused and seen
> So many volumes that so much contained.
> Which furniture may not be deemed least rare
> Amongst those ornaments that sweetly dight
> Thy solitary Wanstead, where thy care
> Had gathered all what heart or eyes delight."

Other accounts of Devonshire relate that he was a great purchaser of books ; in the selection of which he used to be guided by the advice of Sir Robert Cotton. The Library at Wanstead House must have been something very different in his time from what it was in Leicester's. Our story might almost be styled a Tale of Wanstead. There Devonshire established himself after his return from Ireland, having, it appears, purchased the place from Essex immediately before the latter went over to Ireland.* There Laud married him to Lady Rich. There Lady Rich's mother, seven-and-

* "The Earl of Lincoln hath bought Chelsea of Mr. Secretary [Cecil], and the Lord Montjoy Wanstead of the Earl of Essex."—*Chamberlain to Sir D. Carleton, 15th March*, 1599.

twenty years before, had been married to Leicester. There also, probably, was solemnized the Countess's marriage with her third husband Sir Christopher Blount. There much of Lady Rich's innocent childhood must have been spent. There Essex had lived in princely state in the height of his fortunes. And before the place came into the possession of Leicester it had been the property and the residence of the ancestors of Lord Rich. His *quondam* wife, therefore, would have variety enough of old memories around her when she found herself there once more with Devonshire.

Touching her part in the Earl's history Daniel has only a few allusive words :—

> "Summon Detraction to object the worst
> That may be told, and utter all it can;
> It cannot find a blemish to be enforced
> Against him, other than he was a man;
> And built of flesh and blood, and did live here
> Within the region of infirmity;
> Where all perfections never did appear
> To meet in any one so really
> But that his frailty ever did bewray
> Unto the world that he was set in clay.
> And gratitude and charity, I know,
> Will keep no note, nor memory will have,
> Of ought but of his worthy virtues now,
> Which still will live; the rest lies in his grave."

And then he winds up with a circumstantial narrative of the Earl's pious and edifying death, expanding and confirming what Moryson says on that head.

Devonshire died possessed of considerable wealth, and of many valuable appointments. In whatever degree he had lost favour at Court, none of his offices had been

taken from him. Chamberlain in his letter to Winwood, after announcing his death, adds;—"He hath left his lady (for so she is generally now held to be) £1500 a year and most of his moveables; and, of five children that she fathered upon him at the parting from her former husband, I do not hear that he hath provided for more than three; leaving to the eldest son, as I hear, between three and four thousand pounds a-year, and to a daughter six thousand pounds in money. For his offices, it is thought his Lieutenancy of Ireland is or shall be bestowed on the young Duke of York; his Government of Portsmouth, and his company of horse in Ireland, on the Earl of Montgomery. The New Forest stands between the Earl of Pembroke and the Earl of Southampton; and the Mastership of the Ordnance betwixt the Lord Chamberlain and the Lord Carew. Other things there be, which either are not bestowed, or come not within my knowledge."

The five children whom Lady Rich fathered upon the Earl were three sons and two daughters. The sons were named Montjoy, Charles, and St. John. Montjoy, who may have been nine or ten years old when his father died, and who inherited the chief part of his property, was in 1616 made an Irish peer by the title of Baron Montjoy, of Montjoy Fort, in Ulster, as Dugdale phrases it, "by the special favour of King James;" and Charles the First advanced him to the English peerage in 1627, as Baron Montjoy of Thurveston in the county of Derby, and the next year created him Earl of Newport in the Isle of Wight. He lived till 1665; and his honours were afterwards successively enjoyed

by his three sons, George, Charles, and Henry. But none of them left any issue, and the titles became extinct on the death of Henry in 1681.* Nor does either of Devonshire's two other natural sons appear to have left any descendants. Charles, according to Sir Alexander Croke, died about 1644; but it is extraordinary that Sir Alexander should take him to have been the Sir Charles Blount, who, as related at great length in one of the Lansdowne Manuscripts, got engaged in a quarrel with a certain Dutchman in the year 1597, at which date, so far from having been already knighted, Devonshire's son Charles had in all probability not come into existence.†

Of the Earl's two natural daughters the family historian knows very little. The name of the eldest, he says, was Elizabeth. It was she, probably, who, as Camden has recorded, became the wife of a son of Sir Thomas Smith, the Russian Ambassador and Governor of the East India Company (uncle of the first Viscount Strangford); but Smith, who had made this match

* In 1711 a new honor, that of Baron Montjoy of the Isle of Wight, was created in the person of the youngest son of Thomas first Earl of Plymouth, Thomas Windsor, who was already Viscount Windsor in the Irish peerage. The ancestor of the Earls of Plymouth, Andrews Windsor first Baron Windsor, had married Elizabeth Blount, sister and co-heir of Edward second Baron Montjoy, who died in 1475. The title of Baron Montjoy of the Isle of Wight became extinct on the death of the son of the first Baron in 1758; but in 1796 John Fourth Earl of Bute (in Scotland), who had married the daughter of this second Lord Montjoy, was created Viscount Montjoy of the Isle of Wight and Earl of Windsor in the English peerage, at the same time that he obtained his English Marquisate. Viscount Montjoy is, therefore, one of the titles of the present Marquis of Bute.

† See also a Letter of Chamberlain's, dated 17th May, 1598, in *Addl. MS.* 4173.

without asking his father's consent, would seem to have speedily repented, for he left England, Camden adds, about eight months after without taking leave of either father or mother.* Wood, quoting Camden, affirms further that he left "upon some discontent." † This was in July 1619. Perhaps Smith's running away may have been connected with the death of his wife's sister a few weeks before under a cloud of infamy. Camden notes the event under date of the 4th of May in that same year.‡ He calls her Lettice, and describes her as the wife of Arthur Lake, and the natural daughter, as was said, of the Earl of Devonshire. She is, then, the lady who stands recorded in Collins as the eldest daughter of Lord and Lady Rich, and as having been married first to Sir George Carey of Cockington in Devonshire; secondly to Sir Arthur Lake.§ Sir Arthur was the son of Sir Thomas Lake, the Secretary of State, whose story makes one of the most memorable chapters in the private history of the reign of James the First. The storm that threw down the whole family was at this time at its height; but the disreputable death of Sir Arthur's wife was a separate affair. "Sir Arthur Lake," Chamberlain writes to Carleton on the 8th of May, "hath buried his lady with scandal enough; which, among the rest, is not the least *créve-cœur* to the father, to see the fruits of so graceless a generation." On the 14th Chamberlain reports that Sir Arthur had been committed to the Tower, whence after three or four days he had been removed to the King's

* *Annal. Jac.*
‡ *Annal. Jac.*
† *Athen. Oxon.* II. 55.
§ *Peerage*, II. 237 (edit. of 1756).

Bench, on a charge of perjury or subornation of perjury. And on the 19th of June he writes as follows:—"Since the death of Sir Arthur Lake's lady, there is a daughter of hers come to light, thought to be Dick Martin's, or rather a greater man's, but, by the help of good friends, lays claim to Sir George Carew's lands, because she was born in wedlock. It were a strange case if she should recover it; and yet, forsooth, in strictness of law they say it must be so, as though there could be any law, saving God's, without exception. But, to salve the matter, I learn that the heir in possession, having a young son of fit years for her, means to compound the matter by marriage." Sir George Carew, or Carey, the first husband of this graceless lady, was of the same family with the Lords Hunsdon and the Viscounts Falkland.

To Lord Rich also Lady Rich had borne a numerous family;—three sons and three daughters. And his Lordship too entered into a second wedlock; but not so precipitately as his divorced wife, nor, probably, till after she was dead as well as divorced, and he could take such a step without breach of either common law or ecclesiastical canon.* "The Lord Rich," Chamberlain writes, on the 21st of December, 1616, "after much wooing, and several attempts in divers places, hath at last lighted on the Lady Sainpoll, a rich widow of Lincolnshire." The Lady *Sainpoll* was a daughter of Sir Christopher Wray, who died Lord Chief Justice of the

* It may be noticed, however, that Bishop Cosins, in his argument on the bill for dissolving the marriage of Lord Roos (1668), seems to speak of Lord Rich's second marriage as having taken place in the lifetime of his first wife. See *State Trials*, XIII. 1336.

King's Bench in 1603, and the widow of Sir George St. Paul, of Snartford, in the county of Lincoln. His Lordship was no luckier this time than before. In his rich widow he met with his match and his desert. "The Lord Rich," Chamberlain writes again on the 11th of October, 1617, "is said to be in great perplexity, or rather crazed in brain, to see himself overreached by his wife, who hath so conveyed her estate, that he is little or nothing the better by her, and, if she outlive him, like to carry away a great part of his." It is to be hoped, then, that she did outlive him. By her his now somewhat ancient Lordship had no issue; she was perhaps not much more youthful than himself. Rich, however, standing on his money bags, managed, not long after his successful wooing, to clutch another object of ambition. He wanted to be made Earl of Clare; but this was refused, "because," says Camden, "the title of Clare, which is the same with that of Clarence, was a higher honour than could well suit with a family in a manner upstart."* So he was obliged to be satisfied with the somewhat less lofty title of Warwick. With that Earldom the old miser was invested in the beginning of August, 1618: Sir Robert Sidney was made Earl of Leicester, Lord Compton Earl of Northampton, Rich Earl of Warwick, and Lord Cavendish Earl of Devonshire, all about the same time. "But these dignities," Chamberlain writes on the 8th, "cannot defend them from the pens of malicious poets and libellers, who give them new additions, and in plain terms blaze them in another sort;—as, the first to be

* *Annal. Jac.* 1618.—See also *Collins, Hist. Coll.*, 80.

*Vinosus;* the second, crazed; the third, *Cornucopia;* and the fourth, a Lombard or usurer. I have not seen the rhyme, nor do not look after it; but by report it is bitter enough." Rich's popular designation, with its double allusion, was no doubt an old joke; it is unnecessary to suppose that what that would imply was one of the ways in which he was put into a *tête exaltée* state by his present wife. Cornucopia, however, did not continue Earl of Warwick for more than a few months; he died in his mansion at St. Bartholomew's, which had now taken the name of Warwick House, on the 24th of March in the following year.

Of his sons by his former wife, the eldest, Robert, to whom the family honours, old and new, descended in the first instance, was the Earl of Warwick who makes so considerable a figure in our history as the Lord High Admiral under the Long Parliament. Clarendon gives a lively account of him:—"He was a man of a pleasant and companionable wit and conversation, of an universal jollity, and such a license in his words and in his actions, that a man of less virtue could not be found out; so that one might reasonably have believed that a man so qualified would not have been able to have contributed much to the overthrow of a nation and kingdom. But, with all these faults, he had great authority and credit with that people who, in the beginning of the troubles did all the mischief; and by opening his doors, and making his house the rendezvous of all the silenced ministers, in the time when there was authority to silence them, and spending a good part of his estate, of which he was very prodigal, upon them, and by

being present with them at their devotions, and making himself merry with them, and at them, which they dispensed with, he became the head of that party, and got the style of a godly man." The Admiral, however, was really a dashing fellow; beyond comparison the finest specimen of a man that his line ever produced. If his age be correctly stated in the common accounts (but it probably is not) he would be scarcely seventeen when, by the clever management of his mother, he was married to a great heiress, Frances, daughter of Sir William Hatton, and grand-daughter to Sir Francis Gaudy, Chief Justice of the Common Pleas. Chamberlain, writing to Winwood on the 26th of February 1605, reports that the marriage had taken place on the preceding Tuesday; adding that Gaudy had been in treaty with the Lord Treasurer (Dorset) about a marriage between the young lady and his grandson (afterwards Richard third Earl of Dorset), "but the Lady Rich prevented [anticipated] him, and, winning her good will, contracted her secretly to her son." * Warwick was twice married after this; but he had no children except by his first wife. The history of his posterity in the male line is remarkable. Two of his sons died unmarried; but the commencement of the year 1658, nearly forty years after he had come to the title, found the old Admiral still extant, with his two remaining sons, Robert and Charles, and an only son of each. Robert had married the Lady Anne Cavendish, only daughter of William second Earl of Devonshire; she is the Lady Rich whose death is the subject of a well

* *Winwood*, II. 49.

known poem of Waller's, and also of some striking lines by Sidney Godolphin; all perfections as well of mind as of form are attributed to her by her contemporaries; but she was snatched away before she had completed her twenty-seventh year. This was nearly twenty years ago; and now her son, the Honourable Robert Rich, had, on the 11th of November 1657, been married to Frances the youngest daughter of the Protector. It was a love match, carried through by the strong affection of the two young people, against the opposition, for a time at least, of their friends on both sides. There is an interesting letter of Mary Cromwell, the Protector's third daughter, detailing to her brother Henry, then in Ireland, the difficulties and perplexities in which they all still were about half a year before the matter was arranged. "Truly," she writes, "I can truly say it, for these three months, I think, our family, and myself in particular, have been in the greatest confusion and trouble as ever poor family can be in." The negotiation, after it had been begun between Cromwell and the old Earl, had been broken off on a report that young Rich was "a vicious man, given to play, and such like things." "My sister," the fervent, overflowing Mary proceeds, "hearing these things, was resolved to know the truth of it; and truly did find all the reports to be false that were raised of him; and, to tell you the truth, they were so much engaged in affection before this, that she could not think of breaking of it off; so that my sister engaged me, and all the friends she had, who truly were very few, to speak in her behalf to my father, which we did, but could not be

heard to any purpose." After some short time, however, a fresh treaty was begun; but now an obstacle arose from a new quarter; "it seems there is five hundred pounds a year in my Lord Rich's hands, which he has power to sell, and there are some people that persuade his Highness that it would be dishonourable for him to conclude of it without these five hundred pounds a year be settled upon Mr. Rich after his father's death, and my Lord Rich, *having no esteem at all of his son, because he is not so bad as himself,* will not agree to it." "Truly, I must tell you privately," Mary nevertheless adds, "that they are so far engaged as the matter cannot be broken off." When the marriage took place, besides the Lord Protector, both the Earl of Warwick and Lord Rich were present, and also Warwick's half brother, the Earl of Newport, the eldest of the natural sons of Montjoy. This and other facts of the same kind show that the two families, so strangely discriminated, kept up, notwithstanding, the ordinary intercourse of relationship. But it would seem as if Death himself had been looking on at that marriage, and marking out his victims. Within about eighteen months the bridegroom, his grandfather, and his father, as well as the Protector, were all in their graves. Young Rich (he was only three and twenty) died on the 16th of February, 1658; his grandfather, on the 11th of April following; his father, who had then become Earl, on the 29th of May, 1659. The title then went to the Admiral's second son Charles; but his only son Charles Lord Rich, after marrying the Lady Anne Cavendish, sister of the first Duke of Devonshire, had the same

fate with his cousin, dying in the life-time of his father and leaving no issue; and Earl Charles died, the last of his line, in 1673.*

Lady Rich's second son, Henry, having attached himself to the favourite Buckingham, was by his interest first provided with a wife, the daughter and heiress of Sir Walter Cope of Kensington, by whom he came into possession of that seat and manor, and then in 1622 created Baron Kensington, and in 1624 Earl of Holland in Lincolnshire. As soon as Charles the First came to the crown he made the Earl of Holland a Knight of the Garter; and he had afterwards numerous distinguished and lucrative appointments conferred upon him. "The Earl of Holland," says Clarendon, "was a person merely of the King's and his father's creation; raised from the condition of a private gentleman, a younger brother, of an extraction that lay under a great blemish, and without any fortune, to a great height by their mere favour and bounty. And they had not only adorned him with titles, honours, and offices, but enabled him to support those in the highest lustre and with the largest expense; and this King had drawn many inconveniences and great disadvantages upon himself and his service by his preferring him to some trusts which others did not only think themselves, but really were, worthier of; but especially by indulging him so far in

* It deserves to be noted that, while four of the principal parties present at the inauspicious marriage of November, 1657, were so speedily cut off, the fifth, the bride, survived to a remarkably distant date. Frances Cromwell soon married a second husband, Sir John Russell, Bart., to whom she bore a numerous family; and she did not die till 1721, nearly sixty-four years after she had stood at the altar with young Rich.

the rigorous execution of his office of Chief Justice in Eyre, in which he brought more prejudice upon the Court, and more discontent upon the King, from the most considerable part of the nobility and gentry in England than proceeded from any one action that had its rise from the King's will and pleasure." It is supposed that when the storm began to rise, the Earl thought it necessary for his safety to do something to show that so many benefits had not bound him to his royal master; he, therefore, set one of the first examples of desertion by both declining himself to attend his Majesty in his office of First Gentleman of the Bedchamber, on his withdrawing from Whitehall to Hampton Court, and persuading his relation the Earl of Essex, who was Chamberlain of the Household, to do the same. It was in this way, undoubtedly, that Essex was thrown into the arms of the Parliament, and that the Parliament obtained its first Lord General. At a later date, after a contemptible course of vacillation and trimming, Holland took up arms for the King; but with no result except to bring about his own speedy destruction. He was executed before the gate of Westminster Hall, along with the Duke of Hamilton and Lord Capel, on the 9th of March 1649, about five weeks after Charles's own head had been struck off a few hundred yards from the same spot. In addressing the people from the scaffold, which illness and depression of spirits allowed him to do but very feebly, "he spoke," says Clarendon, "of his religion as a matter unquestionable, by the education he had had in the religious family of which he was a branch; which was thought a strange discourse

for a dying man, who, though a son, knew enough of the iniquity of his father's house, which should rather have been buried in silence than by such an unseasonable testimony have been revived in the memory and discourse of men." It is of one of his daughters, "the beautiful Lady Diana Rich," that Aubrey tells the story, which he says he had from a person of honour, of her meeting her own apparition, "habit and everything, as in a looking-glass," as she was walking one day about eleven o'clock in the forenoon in her father's garden at Kensington, that is, in the garden of Holland House. She was then in perfect health, but died of small-pox in about a month. "And it is said," Aubrey adds, "that her sister, the Lady Isabella Thynne, saw the like of herself also before she died." * The Earl's eldest son Robert, who on the death of his father became second Earl of Holland, on the death of Charles fourth Earl of Warwick in 1673 succeeded also to that Earldom. It was the widow of his son, Edward Earl of Warwick and Holland, whom Addison married. Her son Edward Henry, the next Earl, died without issue in 1721, and then the titles went to a grandson of Cope the fourth son of the first Earl of Holland; but he also died without issue male in 1759, on which the two Baronies of Rich and Kensington, and the two Earldoms of Warwick and Holland, all expired. Clarendon had long ago observed, in speaking of the first Earl of Holland, "that there was a very froward fate attended all or most of the posterity of that bed from whence he and his brother of Warwick had their original." The

* *Miscellanies*, 126.

extensive estates of the Rich family had never come into the possession of the descendants of the Earl of Holland; they had, on the death of Charles fourth Earl of Warwick in 1673, been scattered in half-a-dozen different directions, part going to the Earl of Manchester, part to the Earl of Radnor, part to the Lekes then Earls of Scarsdale, part to the Earl of Winchilsea and Nottingham, other portions to the Barrington and the St. John families.* Warwick House alone went with the Earldom. And the eighth and last Earl of Warwick and Holland, with the two Earldoms, inherited none of the lands originally connected with either; the Holland estates had passed on the death of his predecessor, Addison's son-in-law, in 1721, into the possession of William Edwards, of Haverford West, Esq., whose mother was a daughter of Robert fifth Earl of Warwick; and he was made an Irish peer by the title of Baron Kensington in 1776. This first Lord Kensington, the great-great-grandson of Lord and Lady Rich, died, at the age of ninety, in 1801; and the present Lord is his son.†

Charles, the third son of Lord and Lady Rich, was, after having been knighted, slain at the Isle of Rhè in 1627. The three daughters, Penelope, Essex, and Isabel, were all married, the youngest twice. Isabel's second husband, Sir John Smith, of Sutton, in Kent, was the brother of the Mr. Smith who married her

* Lees Priory, the original seat of the Riches, is now the property of Guy's Hospital.

† Holland House was sold by the first Lord Kensington some years before he was raised to the peerage to the Right Honourable Henry Fox, the ancestor of the present Lord Holland.

half-sister the natural daughter of Montjoy. There are probably many descendants of these daughters of Lord and Lady Rich, or of some of them, in existence.

But of Lady Rich herself, the mother of these six sons and five daughters by two fathers both living at the same time, the near relation of Elizabeth, the sister of Essex, the theme of Sidney's verse, the object of his and of Montjoy's passionate love, what more is to be told? The answer of the present narrator must be, Nothing, so far as he knows. Others may be, or may have been, more fortunate; his researches have not detected so much as an authentic mention of her name which brings down her history beyond the death of Devonshire. It is very possible, however, that some information respecting her may exist, even in a printed form, which has escaped his notice; and it can hardly be doubted that a further examination of the manuscript remains of the time would reveal something of what became of her. Mrs. Jameson, who has in her *Romance of Biography* given an eloquent sketch of the story of Lady Rich and Sidney, tells us that she died in obscurity soon after the Earl, but does not say what is her authority. The statement is probable enough, and may at any rate serve till something more, or something else, be ascertained. Penelope Devereux, though not exactly the ancient Baucis that Devonshire would make her out to be in his Epistle to King James—*pia Baucis anus,* must now have been past her prime, and both her fair face and her high spirit may be reasonably supposed to have grown something the worse for wear when the various sorrows that filled the last months of

her connexion with Devonshire came suddenly down upon her. No wonder if she sank now under what she might, perhaps, have sustained with twenty, or even ten, years fewer on her head. In that case life would still have had something in store, or in promise, for her; as it was, her last card was played, her last chance gone. And so the impetuous, susceptible, passion-driven woman, light and vain and erring enough, it may be, but yet, if she deserves our blame, claiming our pity too, had nothing for it but to die.

§ 7.

The old Countess, her mother, was of tougher fibre. Even the extraordinary deluge of calamity that had invaded her in the year 1601 was in no long time surmounted. The next thing we hear of her is her being engaged in a contest with Leicester's son Sir Robert Dudley, who early in 1605 took measures to establish his legitimacy, and whom she thereupon prosecuted in the Star-Chamber on a charge of conspiracy. While that case was going on Rowland White writes from Court on the 26th of April to Lord Shrewsbury;—"I hear that a marriage is concluded between the Earl of Essex and the Lady Catharine Howard, one of my Lord Suffolk's daughters, to the great contentment of Lady Leicester."* The Earl of Essex is the Countess's grandson, the "little Robin" of her letter of June 1598. It was not Catharine, who was the youngest, but Frances the second of the four daughters of Thomas

* *Lodge*, III. 149.

first Earl of Suffolk, whom it was now arranged that "little Robin" should marry. The ceremony which united the boy of fourteen to the girl of thirteen was performed on the 5th of January, 1606, ten days after that solemnized by Laud between the young Earl's aunt and Devonshire. At the time, while the first of the two marriages drew forth universal reprobation and horror, the second looked to every one bright with the fairest visions of hope. But it proved even more unblessed than the other.

That deplorable story, often enough told, may be made short work of here. The match would appear to have been entirely an arrangement of policy between the relations of the bridegroom and those of the bride, an alliance of the two families rather than of the nominal parties to it. The boy husband was immediately sent away to finish his education by foreign travel; the Countess, in whom beauty promising to be of no common brilliancy already dawned, returned to the paternal roof. "The Court," says Arthur Wilson, the principal historian of the affair, "was her nest, her father being Lord Chamberlain; and she was hatched up by her mother, whom the sour breath of that age, how justly I know not, had already tainted; from whom the young lady might take such a tincture, that ease, greatness, and Court glories would more distain and impress upon her than any way wear out and diminish. And, growing to be a beauty of the greatest magnitude in that horizon, was an object fit for admirers, and every tongue grew an orator at that shrine." When the Earl returned home, after three or

four years' absence, his so-called wife evinced no more affection for him than was to be reasonably looked for in the circumstances. Very soon after, probably, an attachment sprung up between Lady Essex and the young and handsome Scotchman, Robert Carr Viscount Rochester, the royal favourite. From this time escape from the hated tie that bound her to another may be supposed to have become the first object of her existence, and one to be compassed at any cost. There was at first some reason to hope that the state of the Earl's health might rid her of him; but he recovered, at least to a certain extent, from a severe illness which had seized him soon after his return home. Then, in her impatience or desperation, she appears to have been induced to hope that sorcery might do something for her; persons would not be wanting, as soon as her case came to be known or suspected, to put such a notion in her head. Once fallen into the hands of such confidants and auxiliaries, she was lost beyond almost the chance or possibility of redemption. Every move she made involved her farther and more inextricably; every successive step in her headlong course carried her down the declivity with augmented impetus. There was nothing that she would not soon be ready to do or to attempt. The powers of evil and of darkness had gotten possession of their victim. No secret guilt, no open shame, would now scare her. She demanded that her marriage with Essex should be declared null. The cause came on for trial in the end of April, 1613, before a Court of twelve delegates appointed by the King; it lasted five months; a sentence of nullity was

pronounced by a majority of seven voices to five on the 16th of September; and on Sunday, the 26th of December, the same fatal St. Stephen's day on which Penelope Devereux, freed, as she thought, from her enforced marriage, had eight years before been formally united by Laud to the Earl of Devonshire, Frances Howard, released from a yoke perhaps still more detested or more despised, was more legally made by Montague Bishop of Bath and Wells the wife of Carr, who had recently been elevated to the dignity of Earl of Somerset. She was married in her hair, as it was expressed, that is, with her hair flowing in ringlets over her shoulders, the customary attire of a maiden bride.

With all this show of purity and innocence, she was already a murderess. Carr had an intimate friend, Sir Thomas Overbury, experienced in the world and in Courts, as well as a man of talent and literary accomplishment, whom he had not only taken as his chief counsellor and guide in his career of favouritism, but had also, it appears, made use of occasionally for other services. It was Overbury, according to his own account, who composed the letters by which his patron, or *protégé*, won Lady Essex. But, although the seduction of that lady was a business in which it was quite in his line to assist, the favourite's subsequent scheme of marrying her did not at all accord with his Mentor's notions of propriety. Lady Essex's father, the Earl of Suffolk, who was Lord Chamberlain, and her great-uncle the Earl of Northampton, who was Lord Privy Seal, were at the head of a faction at Court which till now had been at open war with Rochester and his

adherents; besides all other objections to it, the proposed marriage, in reconciling his friend, or master, to the Howards, threatened to destroy much of Overbury's present importance, perhaps to leave him exposed without protection to the revenge of the powerful enemies he had hitherto braved. He accordingly exerted his influence with Rochester in the most strenuous manner to turn him from his purpose. When this came to the knowledge of Lady Essex, which it did through the Viscount, she is said to have offered a Sir Davy Wood a thousand pounds if he would assassinate Overbury. Another plan, however, was thought safer and surer. By this time the lady's relations the Howards, and especially her uncle, seem to have become almost as eager as herself to effect her transference from Essex to Rochester; the King too had entered warmly into the project, which recommended itself at once as gratifying to the favourite, and as promising to restore peace and quiet to the Court, and to put an end to a state of things which had for some time occasioned his Majesty infinite trouble and vexation. There is every reason to believe, however, that James really thought the marriage with Essex was one which ought to be dissolved; he may have been biassed in forming that opinion by his wishes and partialities, but it is to mistake his character to suppose that he would have taken the part he did throughout the business if such had not been his sincere conviction. Nothing was ever to be made of him except by the tenderest treatment of that conceit of his own understanding, which was his weak, or his weakest,

point. Here, then, was an officious, obstinate, perverse fellow, who, manifestly for his own ends, persisted in standing in the way of an arrangement in itself eminently reasonable in every point of view. As for Essex, the only party among those entitled to have a voice in the matter who was opposed to the dissolution, there were various considerations which might plausibly enough be represented as putting him out of court; but in point of fact his opposition was not to the dissolution of the marriage, but only to the particular ground upon which it was sought to be dissolved, to the form rather than to the substance and effect of the judgment sought by his wife. That he and she should ever live together again was out of the question, whatever should come of her suit; it must in reality, therefore, have been nearly as much desired by the one as by the other that their nominal union should be put an end to. But Overbury was certainly in possession of some secret by which he could have thrown a formidable obstacle in the way of the divorce; it is clear that he had threatened to take effectual measures to prevent it. The getting rid of him became, therefore, a matter of the first importance. The expedient that was first tried might have answered that purpose without anything further being done; it might even have been taken to imply an acknowledgment of his power, and a wish to secure his co-operation. He was directed to make himself ready to set out on an embassy to Russia. On his spurning this bribe, however, and declaring that his Majesty had no right to send him into exile, he was immediately committed to the Tower as guilty of a contempt of the royal authority.

This was on the 21st of April, a few days before the commencement of the proceedings for the divorce before the Court of Delegates. Overbury died in the Tower on the 15th of September, the day before the sentence of nullity was pronounced.

That sentence, it may be observed, was couched in terms bearing as lightly upon Essex as possible; his marriage with the Lady Frances Howard was declared to have been and to be utterly void and of none effect; but he, as well as she, was expressly left free to contract any other marriage. All went on smoothly for a considerable time; some dark suspicions were whispered; but it was not till the latter end of July 1615 that information accidentally reached some members of the government which produced a strong conviction that Overbury had been unfairly made away with. Somerset and his countess were immediately arrested; as were also Sir Gervase Elwes, Lieutenant of the Tower, Anne Turner, the confidante of the countess, James Franklin, the apothecary charged with having supplied the poison, and Richard Weston, the under keeper to whom the special charge of Overbury had been committed, and by whom the poison was said to have been administered. Elwes, who had been appointed to his place by the Earl of Northampton after Overbury's committal, Weston, Franklin, and Mrs. Turner, were all forthwith tried, found guilty, and executed. Northampton had died about a year before. He was believed to have been a principal, along with his niece and her husband, in the conspiracy for taking away Overbury's life. Yet, except that he was suspected of being a

Roman Catholic, scarcely any man of his time had had a higher reputation for learning, both secular and theological, or made greater show of piety; besides other writings of a similar character, still extant in print or in manuscript, he had employed part of his leisure in drawing up a set of forms for private prayer, transcripts of which were in great request, as appears from a letter of the noble author sent along with one of them to Archbishop Whitgift, in which he dilates with much fervour of phrase upon the comfort he had found, by many years' experience, that such exercises yielded to a faithful soul;* he was the founder of no fewer than three hospitals; and his last letter was one written from his death-bed to Somerset, his supposed confederate in this murder, than which nothing can be apparently more expressive of a conscience at peace with itself.

The trials of the Earl and Countess of Somerset were deferred till the end of May 1616. They were then brought separately, first the Countess, the next day the Earl, before a Court of Peers, presided over by the Lord Chancellor Ellesmere as Lord High Steward; the Countess pleaded guilty; the Earl was found guilty by an unanimous verdict, but persisted in protesting his innocence. Both were pardoned; but they were detained in the Tower for nearly four years (till January 1622); and the Countess lived till the 23rd of August 1632, the Earl till July 1645.

The unhappy pair, in their ruined condition, soon lost, with everything else, all affection for each other. So early as in the beginning of June 1617 we have

* *Birch*, II. 325.

Chamberlain thus reporting:—"There is a great falling out of late 'twixt the Earl of Somerset and his lady in the Tower; but it is not yet so public that I can learn the original or particulars. But certainly there is a great jar, howsoever it will piece again or be smothered." It is affirmed that ere long they became wholly estranged, or worse. But one daughter—

> "The child of love, though born in bitterness
> And nurtured in convulsion,"—

for she came just after their preternatural night had fallen upon them, like a yet unextinguished ray from the glowing morn of their union, has transmitted their mingled blood even to our time. The child was brought into the world on the 9th of December 1615, while the Countess still remained in the custody of the sheriff; she was not committed to the Tower till the 22nd of March following, when she was sent thither "upon so short warning," Chamberlain relates in a letter dated the 6th of April, "that she had scarce leisure to shed a few tears over her little daughter at the parting." "Otherwise," he continues, "she carried herself very constantly enough, saving that she did passionately deprecate and entreat the Lieutenant that she might not be lodged in Sir Thomas Overbury's lodging; so that he was fain to remove himself out of his own chamber for two or three nights, till Sir Walter Raleigh's lodging could be furnished and made fit for her." On the 8th of June, after her condemnation, Chamberlain writes:—"The Lady Knollys [her sister] and some other friends have had access to the lady divers

times since her conviction, and carried her young daughter to her twice or thrice. But I hear not of any that comes at him [the Earl]." The Lady Anne Carr, inheriting her mother's beauty, became the object of the passionate attachment of William Lord Russell, eldest son of the fourth Earl of Bedford. The old Earl long refused his consent to this alliance; he is said to have told his son that he gave him leave freely to choose a wife from any family in the kingdom, except only that; but he yielded at last, and they were married in the summer of 1637. To make up the portion for his daughter demanded by Bedford, £12,000, Somerset sold all the property that remained to him in the world, his plate, his jewels, his house, and his furniture. It is related that Lady Russell had been brought up in ignorance of the story of her parents, and that she first learned it some time after her marriage from a pamphlet that had been left on a seat in a window which she chanced to take up. She was found senseless on the floor, with the book open beside her. In 1641 her husband became the fifth Earl of Bedford, and they lived together nearly half a century. She died in May 1684; the Earl was in 1694 created Duke of Bedford, and survived till September 1700. Of their ten children, seven sons and three daughters, the third son was William Lord Russell, the famous patriot and martyr; his son succeeded as the second Duke, and the honours of his illustrious house have ever since remained in the line of his descendants.

The Earl of Essex, as soon as the sentence annulling his marriage was pronounced, proceeded to his

grandmother's house at Drayton Bassett, and there for some time shut himself up from the world. His was the most astounding yet of all the family matrimonial histories, various and extraordinary as they had been, and, with that of her eldest daughter, and her own three, besides one or two others which have not yet been touched upon, must have afforded the old lady ample matter for reflection. Life cannot have often unrolled such a retrospective review.

The past, however, if it was beyond recall, was also without power to return; it could no more come back than it could be brought back; it had been borne, and had done its worst; it was no longer matter of either dread or doubt; its demands, heavy and cruel as they had been, had all been paid; without her own consent and co-operation, its power to torture and lacerate was gone; it was become a mere phantom of the memory; its black mass might be ever growing huger and blacker, but, if it were to expand till it covered the earth and smote the heavens, it could never reach the present hour; that, therefore, she continued to enjoy with her usual philosophical equanimity. The next glimpse we get of her is from Arthur Wilson in the history he has left us of his own Life. Wilson appears to have entered the service of the Earl of Essex immediately after his divorce. He was with his Lordship at Chartley towards Michaelmass 1614. A strange curiosity, or some other passion, had drawn Essex to be one of the lookers on in Westminster Hall while the woman who had formerly borne his name and lain in his bosom stood at the bar to hear herself charged with murder, to make confession of the

crime, and to receive sentence of death; but it was not till after some years more that he began again to mix with the world. At last, in the summer of 1620, having raised a regiment of foot, numbering three hundred men, of whom above a hundred were gentlemen of quality, he proceeded as a volunteer to the Palatinate; and for some years following he was in the habit of going over in like manner every summer to the continent to seek military experience wherever it was to be found. "The winter," says Wilson, "we spent in England; either at Drayton, my Lord's grandmother's, Chartley, his own house, or at some of his brother the Earl of Hertford's houses. Our private sports abroad, hunting; at home, chess or catastrophe. Our public sports (and sometimes with great charge and expense) were masques or plays; wherein I was a contriver both of words and matter. For, as long as the good old Countess of Leicester lived (the grandmother to these noble families) her hospitable entertainment was garnished with such, then harmless, recreations."* The expression is odd: it was not till several years after this that Wilson adopted puritanical principles; and he speaks as if masques and plays were really harmless things till he began to think them otherwise. It is *naïve* enough.

At last we hear of the old Countess beginning to break down. Sir Robert Sidney, who had been created Earl of Leicester in 1618, died on the 13th of July 1626; and on the 27th Rowland White writes from Baynard's Castle to Sidney's son, then at Penshurst,

* *Peck*, 466.

who now bore the title:—"My Lady Leicester remembers her service to your honour and my Lady. If she fall away as she hath done these late days, she will not stay long after my Lord your father. She hath settled her estate; she hath given means to erect a monument for my Lord your father in Penshurst: she hath given your Lordship, your lady, your sisters, legacies. So to some of my Lord and her own friends; and to divers of my Lord your father's servants."* She was now in her eighty-sixth or eighty-seventh year. But she was not to pass away yet; nor till she had witnessed one or two more incidents of her race's strange eventful history.

She still lived when her grandson the Earl of Essex, in the year 1630, seventeen years after his divorce, and when he had now attained the mature age of thirty-seven, had the boldness to venture upon a second wife. This affair in the end materially affected Wilson's own fortunes; and he has told the story with all the unction of the *quorum pars magnâ fui*:—"That year we wintered at the Earl of Hertford's in Wiltshire, where a fine young gentlewoman, Mrs. Elizabeth Paulet, then was, a visitant only of the noble Countess my Lord's sister. And, such fair company being acceptable at festival times, she was invited to stay all Christmas; where her winning behaviour wrought so far upon my noble master that, in Lent following, he married her. I must confess, she appeared to the eye a beauty full of harmless sweetness; and her conversation was affable and gentle. And I cannot be persuaded that it was forced,

* *Sidney Papers*, II. 370.

but natural to her then present condition; and the height of her marriage and greatness, as an accident, altered her very nature; for she was the true image of Pandora's box. When my Lord had fixed his affections on her, I found his Lordship cold in his familiar and gracious discourses to me; . . . . which I perceiving, could not but express a cloudy and discontented countenance; which gave my new-married lady some cause of anger against me. But this noble and ever to me too indulgent Lord called me to him, and asked me the reason of my sadness. I told him I found his Lordship did not look upon me with so favourable an eye as he formerly had. He replied, I knew you would be averse to my marriage, and, therefore, did not make you acquainted with it; but be you to me the same servant you have been, and I will be to you the same master. This did again recomfort me; and I found by his Lordship's favours the assurance of his goodness. But he lady was so irradicated in malice (supposing my cloudy brow was contracted because she shined in so bright a sphere), [that she] never left working and undermining to displace me. And when, by the examination of all my accounts, and all the artifice she could use, it would not be done, she feigned a sickness, took her chamber, and protested never to come out of it as long as I staid in the house. Which I hearing, desired my noble master's leave to depart. He proffered to send me into Ireland, to have the managing of his estate there; but, knowing there was no bound to a woman's malice, I desired to be in such a condition that her anger might not reach me. So, in July 1630, we

parted. And, within two years after, this malicious piece of vanity, unworthy of so noble a husband, being found in another's adulterous arms, was separated from him, to her eternal reproach and infamy." *

So far Wilson. But there is another version of the story. Mrs. Elizabeth Paulet was a daughter of Sir William Paulet, of Eddington, in Wiltshire, the eldest of the four natural sons of William third Marquis of Winchester, all born of one mother, Mistress Lambert, and all knights; "to whom, as I have heard," says Dugdale, "he granted leases of lands, for the term of an hundred years, of little less than four thousand pounds per annum value; which lands are to this day called the *Bastards' Lands*." Sir William's wife, according to Granger, was by her mother a great-grand-daughter of the first Marquis of Winchester, and by the father a descendant in the same degree from Sir Henry Seymour, brother to the first Duke of Somerset, the Lord Protector. So that Mrs. Elizabeth may, upon the whole, be said to have been high born. Granger makes her marriage with Essex to have taken place early in the spring of 1631, or a year after the time stated by Wilson; and his account seems to be confirmed by a passage in one of Mr. John Pory's newsletters to Sir Thomas Puckering, dated the 21st of April 1631:— "My noble Lord of Essex hath brought his new-married lady to town, extreme sick, to recommend her to the skill of the doctors." † And she lived with

* *Peck*, 469.

† *Harl. MS.* 7000.—Anthony Wood (*Athen. Oxon.* III. 191.) says that the marriage took place at Netley, the Earl of Hertford's house, on the 11th of March, 1630, meaning, probably, 1631.

Essex, we are assured, about four years. Wilson's is evidently a somewhat impassioned narrative. He omits even to mention that she bore a son, to whom the Earl gave his own Christian name, and that the young Viscount Hereford lived till he was five years old. Essex did not accept him without some suspicion; he had announced that he would only own the child for his if it should be born on or before the 5th of November, and it made its appearance on that very day. Such, at least, is the averment of Granger's authority, who, as we shall see presently, ought to have known something of the case. It is clear that matters must by this time have been rapidly advancing to a crisis. The person the Countess was accused of intriguing with was a Mr. Udall, or Uvedale, who, it is affirmed, only visited Essex House (did all this, then, take place in London?)* to pay his addresses to her sister. "The injuries which she suffered in her reputation were," it is maintained, "the effects of the spleen and malice of her Lord's servants, whom she had highly offended by introducing order and economy into his family; and

* Essex House, the same in which Essex's mad insurrection broke out and was crushed, was the first of the series of great houses extending from Temple Bar along the Strand. Founded by Walter Stapleton, Bishop of Exeter, in the reign of Edward II., it was originally called Exeter House. "The house," says Pennant, "is said to have been very magnificent. Lacy, Bishop of Exeter in the reign of Henry VI., added a great hall. The first Lord Paget, a good Catholic, made no scruple of laying violent hands on it in the grand period of plunder. He improved it greatly, and called it after his own name." It afterwards came into the possession of the Earl of Leicester, and was called Leicester House. Leicester, as we have seen, left it in his will to Essex. Its site is still marked by the names of Essex Street, Essex Stairs, and Devereux Court.

moreover of the ill-will of Sir Walter Devereux, the Earl's near relation, who had conceived a mortal antipathy against her." At any rate, the result was, that the Earl turned her off, and that after his death she married, not Mr. Udall, but a Mr. Thomas Higgons,—from whom it is that Granger derives his account. "A Funeral Oration, spoken over the Grave of Elizabeth Countess of Essex, by her Husband, Mr. Thomas Higgons, at her interment in the Cathedral Church at Winchester, Sept. 16, 1656;" was, it seems, printed at London in that same year, although Granger had only been able to procure a manuscript copy of it. "The Countess of Essex," the Biographical Historian runs on, "had a greatness of mind which enabled her to bear the whole weight of infamy which was thrown upon her; but it was, nevertheless, attended with a delicacy and sensibility of honour which poisoned all her enjoyments. Mr. Higgons has said much, and I think much to the purpose, in her vindication; and was himself fully convinced, from the tenor of her life, and the words which she spoke at the awful close of it, that she was perfectly innocent." She had several daughters by Higgons, who was more than thirty years younger than Essex, and must have been her own junior by a good many years. He would be only two or three and twenty when he married the Countess. She died on the 30th of August, 1656. Higgons, whose father was Rector of Westburgh, in Shropshire, survived till 1691, when he died at the age of sixty-seven. He is the author of several other publications besides his Funeral Oration on his wife. Having entered parliament, he

was knighted after the Restoration, and was employed as envoy, first to the Duke of Saxony, afterwards at the Court of Vienna. He was the father, by a second wife, of Bevil Higgons, whose "Remarks on Burnett's History of his Own Times" is a well-known book.

Her grandson's second and last matrimonial experiment had probably exploded before the old Countess of Leicester quitted the stage. She got quite vigorous again after her illness in the summer of 1626. Mr. John Pory writes from London to Sir Thomas Puckering on the 23rd of February 1632:—"The Earl of Banbury, aged four score and six, is said now to lie upon his deathbed; but I hear that his sister, my Lady of Leicester, being six years elder, can yet walk a mile in a morning."* Lord Banbury lived till the 25th of May.

In this same news-letter we find the following notice:—"On Friday my Lord of Essex, accompanied by my Lords of Warwick and of Holland, was present at the solemnisation of his mother's funeral in the chancel at Tonbridge; her corpse in a chariot covered with black velvet, attended on by eight coaches and a great troop of horse, being brought thither by torches at midnight." Here then was Frances Walsingham also called away before her still lively old mother-in-law. The widow of Sidney and of Essex had about two years after Essex's death married a third husband, Richard de Burgh, fourth Earl of Clanricarde in the Irish peerage, eventually in 1628 created Earl of St. Albans in that of England. In June, 1602, she had

* *Ellis, 2nd Series*, III. 268.

lost her mother. On the 27th of that month Chamberlain writes to Sir Dudley Carleton:—"The old Lady Walsingham died the last week almost suddenly, or within an hour's warning, and is buried secretly in Paul's by her husband." On the 12th of April, 1603, the same prince of news-writers reports as follows:—"Here is a common bruit that the Earl of Clanricarde hath married the Lady of Essex, wherewith many that wished her well are nothing pleased; and the speech goes that the King hath taken order and sent her word that her son shall be brought up with the young Prince." She had been left in very straitened circumstances by Essex, who had himself, indeed, been all his life in difficulties. So early as in 1589, when about to set out on what was called the Voyage of Portugal, we have him writing to the Vice-Chamberlain (his grandfather Sir Francis Knollys) in this strain:—"What my courses have been I need not repeat, for no man knoweth them better than yourself. What my state now is I will tell you:—my revenue no greater than it was when I sued my livery; my debts at the least two or three and twenty thousand pounds. Her Majesty's goodness hath been so great, as I could not ask more of her; no way left to repair myself but mine own adventure, which I had much rather undertake than to offend her Majesty with suits, as I have done heretofore. If I speed well I will adventure to be rich; if not I will never live to see the end of my poverty."* About a year after this we find him forced to part with his estate of Keyston in Huntingdonshire. "This manor,"

* *Murdin*, 635.

he writes to Burghley, "is of mine ancient inheritance, free from incumbrance; a great circuit of ground in a very good soil, surveyed by Mr. Taverner for me this very last year. But I am so far in debt, and so weary of owing, as sell I must."* In January 1599, before he went over to Ireland, the Queen cancelled a bond she held of his for £21,000.† The following letter from his widow to Robert Cecil, dated the 8th of April 1601, explains the state of his affairs at his death:—"Finding that my late unfortunate husband's whole estate was made over to sundry persons for the payment of his great debts, and that little or nothing (for aught I yet learn, not forty pounds a-year) will arise out of all the living towards the maintenance and education of my three poor children, especially if forfeiture be taken by her Majesty of that part of the land and lease conveyed to Sir Gilly Merrick, whereunto her Majesty is now entitled by his [Merrick's] attainder; .. . I most earnestly entreat you to become an humble intercessor to her Majesty in my behalf, that, in her royal bounty and princely goodness, her Highness will remit those forfeitures made unto her by Sir G. Merrick's attainder, and suffer them to run on to the discharging of debts, as they were intended in the conveyances."‡ Frances Walsingham, who is the Pastorella of the Sixth Book of the *Fairy Queen* (although it has escaped the Commentators), bore the Earl of Clanricarde a son, whom Charles the First in 1644 raised to the rank of Marquis;

* *Ellis, 2nd Series*, III. 81.

† *Letter of Chamberlain in Addl. MS.* 4173.

‡ *Transcript by Birch in Addl. MS.* 4160.

but he left no male posterity. The present Marquis of Clanricarde, whose Marquisate is a new creation, but who is the fourteenth inheritor of the Earldom, is descended from a younger brother of the Lord Clanricarde whom Lady Essex married.

Death did not find Lettice Knollys till more than two years and a half after he had struck her aged but still much younger brother, by which time, if Pory's account may be depended on, she would be in her ninety-fourth or ninety-fifth year. A wooden tablet fixed on the right hand of the magnificent tomb of her second husband in the Collegiate Church of Warwick exhibits in golden letters the following not exactly golden lines, headed "Upon the Death of the Excellent and Pious Lady Lettice Countess of Leicester, who died upon Christmas Day, in the morning, 1634:"—

"Look into this vault and search it well;
Much treasure in it lately fell.
We all are robbed, and all do say
Our wealth was carried this away.
And, that the theft might ne'er be found,
'Tis buried closely under ground.
Yet, if you gently stir the mould,
There all our loss you may behold;
There you may see that face, that hand,
Which once was fairest in the land:
She that in her youngen years
Matched with two great English peers;
She that did supply the wars
With thunder, and the Court with stars;
She that in her youth had been
Darling to the Maiden Queen,
Till she was content to quit
Her favour for her favourite.
Whose gold thread when she saw spun,
And the death of her brave son;

Thought it safest to retire,
From all care and vain desire,
To a private country cell;
Where she spent her days so well,
That to her the better sort
Came as to an holy court;
And the poor that liv-ed near
Dearth nor famine could not fear
Whilst she lived she liv-ed thus;
Till that God, displeased with us,
Suffered her at last to fall,
Not from him, but from us all.
And, because she took delight
Christ's poor members to invite,
He fully now requites her love,
And sends his angels from above,
That did to heaven her soul convey
To solemnize his own birth day."

To the verses is appended the name of the poet, GERVAS CLIFTON. This is no doubt the same person the commencement of whose biography we find in the Drayton parish register:—"Gervas, the son of Sir Gervas Clifton, Knight, was born the 15th of December, and was baptised at the Manor, privately, the 2nd day of January, 1611." (1612).* He would be a great-grandson of the Countess: Sir Gervas Clifton married Penelope, one of the daughters of Lord and Lady Rich.

The elastic old woman, then, was the same to the end; not to be repressed by weight of years or any other weight that could be laid upon her, still contentedly and cheerfully accommodating herself to circumstances, nourishing no selfish unsocial regrets, but finding her own happiness in making everybody about her as happy as she could. It is impossible not

* *Shaw's Stafford.*, II. 11.

to have a considerable respect for her, think of some things what we may. One can imagine her, with attenuated but still erect frame, and face that has lost its bloom but not all its grace either of expression or of form, neither its natural liveliness nor its courtly elegance, slowly taking her regular morning walk with staff in hand, while every villager or villager's child she meets makes humblest obeisance to the ancient lady, and has a kind word in return. It is like the middle of the preceding century come back again, an apparition of the early Elizabethan time in an advanced condition of quite another state of things. One thinks, as she passes on, with how many realities of old splendour, or at least pictures of such taken from the life, that memory must be hung, which no other possesses, which no other ever will possess. She has seen what others can only fancy; she has breathed the actual air of that foreign land, one might say of that extinct world, of which others can only attain a comparatively faint, possibly a very false, conception from report. What to us are but guesses, dreams, ingenious fabrications, are certainties to her. She is to us like one who has been down among the dead. Think of her calling to mind sometimes the days when the first Essex, then the young Viscount Hereford, won her heart and hand, not far from fourscore years ago! It must seem to herself like looking back upon a previous state of existence, when she might almost doubt if she was the same being that she is now. Her descendant, it will be observed, says very little in his poetical tribute of her first husband, and nothing at all of

her third; indeed he all but blinks Essex, though his own great-grandfather, as completely as Blount, for the Queen's favourite, for whom she is said to have quitted the Queen's favour, must be understood to be Leicester. The verses, however, paint her old age as having been much what we should fancy it would be. Her kindness to the poor, which is so strongly dwelt upon, is an interesting feature in the delineation, and one which all that is known of her would especially lead us to expect to find in it. What is said about the "better sort" being in the habit of repairing to her "as to an holy court," may be thought a little more difficult to understand.

We have seen that in July 1626, when it was thought she would probably not last much longer, the Countess was in London. She had perhaps come up to town to make her will. But the latter portion of her extended life was mostly spent at Drayton Basset. She and Blount seem to have taken up their residence here upon their marriage; and here she died forty-five years after. Drayton Basset, lying about a couple of miles to the south of Tamworth, had been in ancient times the domain of the Lords Basset, but had latterly fallen to the crown, by which a long lease of it had been granted in the reign of Henry the Eighth; this lease Leicester had acquired, and left, as appears by his will, to his wife; and Sir Christopher Blount is supposed to have afterwards purchased the fee. The old Manor-house, which he and the Countess had inhabited, and in which she continued to reside throughout her third widowhood, was still standing towards the end of the last

century. There is a view of it in Shaw's *Staffordshire* from a sketch taken in 1791. The mansion, Shaw remarks, was at this time "a curious specimen of the occasional simplicity of our ancient nobility in their houses. . . . It was principally of wood and plaster, with a rude old hall, hung round with portraits, stags' heads, &c.; and quadrangular, with several side staircases, like an old college, and the rooms mostly small." It seems to have consisted only of a ground floor with a low attic, and has the appearance of a farm-house or cottage rather than of a manor-house. On the death of the Countess of Leicester Drayton Basset descended to her grandson the Earl of Essex; and on his death it was inherited by his elder sister Frances Marchioness of Hertford. She devised it to her grand-daughter the Lady Frances Finch, wife of Sir Thomas Thynne, afterwards created Viscount Weymouth; from him it descended to the first Marquis of Bath, by whom it was sold to Messrs. Peel and Wilkes about sixty years ago; and the spot so long the residence of the old Countess is now the property and the well-known seat of the Right Hon. Sir Robert Peel, Baronet.

The latter portion of the life of the Countess's grandson, the third and last Devereux Earl of Essex, belongs to the public history of the country. He is indeed much more of a public and historical character than either his grandfather or his father. His appointment in July 1642 as General of the Army of the Parliament made him for the moment the most conspicuous and important personage in the kingdom. Three months afterwards, in striking the first blow in the great

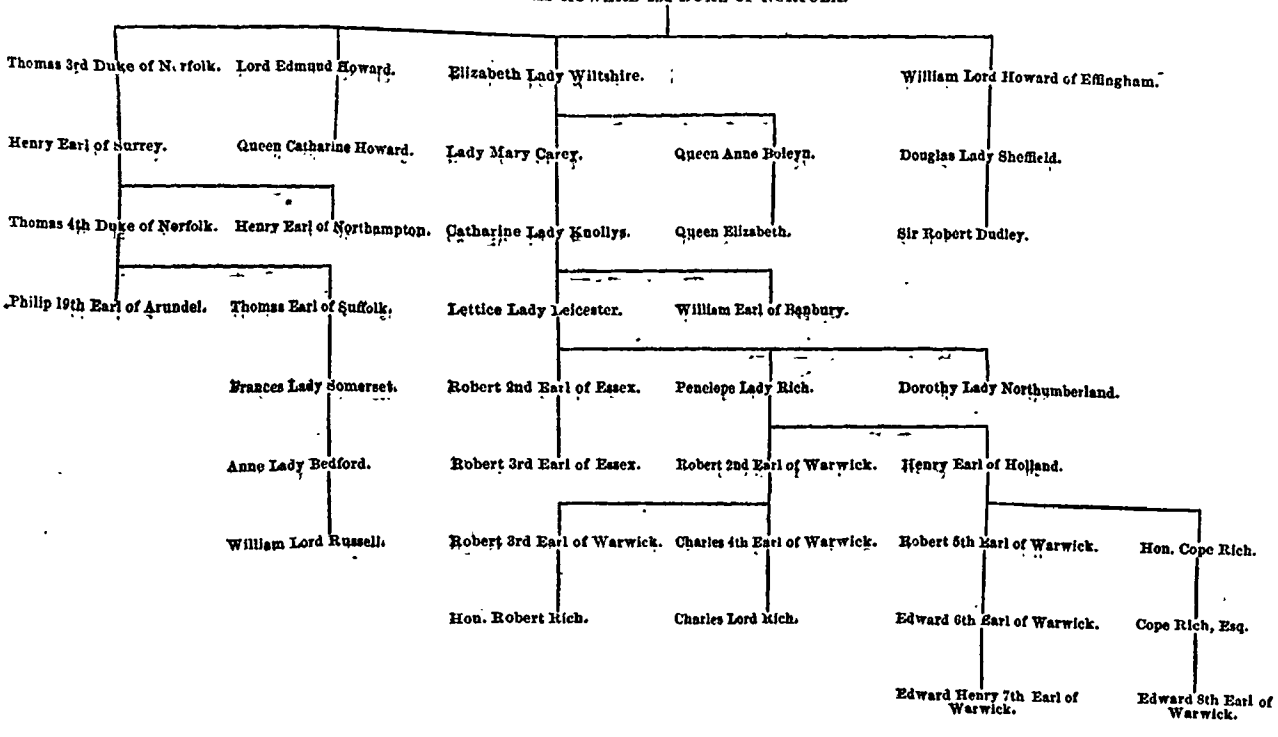
national quarrel at Edgehill, he did the boldest thing that had been done by an English subject since the foundation of the monarchy. Yet circumstances, rather than anything daring or dashing in himself, must have the praise or the blame of having pushed him on to his unprecedented position. The character of the first Parliamentary Lord General is well hit off, and his valuation not unfairly struck, by Clarendon, whatever may be thought of some of the expressions of the noble historian in reference to the cause of which Essex was now put forward as the leader or champion:—"A weak judgment, and some vanity, and much pride will hurry a man into as unwarrantable and as violent attempts, as the greatest and most unlimited and insatiable ambition will do. . . . His pride supplied his want of ambition, and he was angry to see any other man more respected than himself, because he thought he deserved it more and did better requite it. . . . No man had credit enough with him to corrupt him in point of loyalty to the King whilst he thought himself wise enough to know what treason was. . . . His vanity disposed him to be His Excellency; and his weakness, to believe that he should be the General in the Houses as well as in the field, and be able to govern their counsels and restrain their passions as well as to fight their battles, and that by this means he should become the preserver, and not the destroyer, of the King and kingdom. With this ill-grounded confidence he launched into that sea, where he met with nothing but rocks and shelves, and from whence he could never discover any safe port to harbour in." Though

growing every day more and more dissatisfied, he held on with his masters of the Parliament for nearly three years; and, when he surrendered his command, on the passing of the Self-denying Ordinance, in April 1645, his vanity was soothed by a vote conferring upon him a pension of ten thousand a year,—not a penny of which was ever paid. He died at Essex House, London, on the 14th of September 1646. With him died the Earldom of Essex; the Viscountcy of Hereford fell to Sir Walter Devereux, Bart., the son of a half-brother of the first Earl. His posterity also died out by the end of the century; the present Viscount is descended from his younger brother.

Dr. Plot states, on the authority of what he calls "her stem at the Manor of Drayton," meaning, apparently, a pedigree, or genealogical tree, there preserved, that the old Countess of Leicester had the happiness of seeing the grandchildren of her grandchildren, making five generations all living at the same time.* The Honourable Robert Rich, who married Frances Cromwell, and who was the grandson of her grandson the Earl of Warwick, was probably born before she died; and others of her great-grandchildren may have also been already fathers or mothers;—Gervas Clifton, the poet, for one, who was four-and-twenty at the date of her decease. One of her descendants in the fifth degree was the celebrated Henry St. John Viscount Bolingbroke; his mother was a daughter of the third Earl of Warwick, the son of the Lord Admiral. Her existing descendants are very numerous. Among those of her

* *Plot's Staffordshire*, 328.

son Robert, second Earl of Essex, are (through his eldest daughter, Frances), the Duke of Buccleugh, the Duke of Buckingham, the Marquis of Ailesbury, the Earl of Cardigan, (through his youngest daughter, Dorothy), the Marquis Townshend and Earl Ferrers. Among those of her eldest daughter, Penelope, are, the Duke of Montrose, the Duke of Manchester, the Marquis of Anglesey, the Earl of Galloway, the Earl de Grey, the Earl of Ripon, and Lord Kensington. Among those of her youngest daughter, Dorothy, are, the Duke of Somerset, the Duke of St. Albans, the Duke of Devonshire, the Duke of Marlborough, the Duke of Newcastle, the Duke of Northumberland, the Earl of Ashburnham, Earl Fitzwilliam, the Earl of Egremont, Earl Spencer, the Earl of Beverley, the Earl of Carnarvon, the Earl of Besborough, the Earl of Romney, the Earl of Ducie, Viscount Strangford, Lord Churchill, and Lord de Lisle.




GENEALOGICAL TABLE.

# THE EARLDOM OF BANBURY.

The old Puritan Sir Francis Knollys cuts, it must be confessed, an awkward figure, or at least occupies a curious position, for a person of his principles, in the shifting drama of family history in which he sustains a part. He looks like an individual accidentally involved and carried along in a moving crowd with which he has no proper or natural connexion. It is as if a Quaker were to get entangled in the glittering procession of robed and coroneted peers at a coronation. It was altogether rather a strange matrimonial alliance that he formed. I have passed over the scandal about his wife's mother, Mary Boleyn. His productive marriage with Queen Elizabeth's cousin cannot, as far as we have yet seen, be pronounced, on the most indulgent interpretation, to have been productive of very puritanical results. And we shall now find that his second son, through whom his male line was continued, ran a matrimonial career almost as much out of the common course as that of his eldest daughter, or that of her eldest daughter, and one the irregularities or eccentricities of which entailed inconveniences and perplexities of a more obstinate kind. The present is, for the length of time that it lasted, the most remarkable peerage case on record.

All that need be mentioned concerning Sir Francis's

eldest son, Henry Knollys, is that he died in the lifetime of his father, leaving only two daughters. William, the second son, who was born in or about 1546, had come to be a considerable person before the end of the reign of Elizabeth. He had been knighted, had represented the county of Oxford in parliament, had been made a Privy Councillor, and, after having held the office of Comptroller of the Household, had obtained, in December 1602, the still more honourable and more lucrative one of Treasurer, the place next in rank to that of the Lord Steward, being the same which his father had held at the time of his death. It was his house, "at the Tilt End," to which, it may be remembered, Elizabeth was to have come in February 1598 to meet his sister Lady Leicester, and to receive from her the fair jewel of three hundred pounds value. Long afterwards, in October 1615, the Countess of Somerset, when first charged with the murder of Overbury, was directed, by the commissioners appointed to inquire into that matter, to keep her chamber either in her own house at Blackfriars, or in that of Knollys "near the Tilt Yard."* The site of the Tilt Yard was to the south of the Horse Guards, nearly opposite to the Banqueting House at Whitehall. Chamberlain, in a letter dated the 8th of May 1602, makes mention of Knollys having entertained the Queen in his house at St. James's Park. In the preceding September, we learn from the same authority, he had entertained her Majesty at *Cawsham*, that is, his estate of Caversham, in Berkshire. When James came to the throne Sir William Knollys shared in the

* *Amos*, 41.

royal favour which fell upon all the connexions of the late Earl of Essex; he was not only continued in his post of Treasurer, but on the 13th of May 1603 he was raised to the peerage by the title of Baron Knollys of Greys. The manor of Rotherfield Greys, in the county of Oxford, had been granted to his father by Henry the Eighth; and had descended to him in terms of the original grant, along with the manors of Cholcey and Caversham in Berkshire, and other lands, which his father had bequeathed to him as his eldest son, with remainder to his other sons Robert, Richard, Francis, and Thomas, and the heirs-male of their bodies respectively, for the "continuance of the said lands in the name and blood of Knollys."

Sir William had married early in life Dorothy the fifth of the six daughters of Edmund the first Lord Bray, and the widow of Edmund Lord Chandos. This lady must have been a good many years his senior, for her father died in 1539. He probably married her not long after the death of her first husband, which took place in 1573. We have seen that the author of *Leicester's Commonwealth* speaks of the daughter, which he asserts Lady Essex to have borne to Leicester in the lifetime of Essex, as having been confided to the care of her brother's accommodating wife, the Lady Chandos. To her first husband Lady Chandos had borne two sons and two daughters; by her second she had by one account no issue, by another only a daughter, who died in infancy. Perhaps it was this daughter whom the gossip of the day made to have been the child of Lady Essex and Leicester.

At any rate, Sir William, now become Lord Knollys, losing his first wife in the end of October 1605, was left, in his fifty-ninth or sixtieth year, a childless widower. In these circumstances he lost no time in taking to himself another helpmate. On the 19th of January following he married the Lady Elizabeth Howard, the eldest daughter of Thomas Earl of Suffolk, and the sister of Lady Frances Howard who had been married about a fortnight before to the young Earl of Essex. Within little more than three weeks, then, we have a trio of notable nuptial solemnisations; that of the Earl of Devonshire and Lady Rich on the 26th of December, that of the Earl of Essex and Lady Frances Howard on the 5th of January, and that of Lord Knollys, the uncle of Lady Rich, and the great-uncle of Essex, to Lady Elizabeth Howard, the sister of Lady Frances, on the 19th of the same month.

Sir Harris Nicolas, to whom we are indebted for the fullest and clearest account of the Banbury case, holds the age of Lady Elizabeth Howard, when she was married to Lord Knollys, to have been little more than nineteen.* The inscription on her tomb would make her to have been three years older; but her baptism is recorded in the parish register to have taken place on the 11th of August 1586, and Sir Harris infers that she was probably born within a few days of that date. The matter is of scarcely any importance in its bearing upon any of the doubtful points in the case; but it may be remarked that Sir Harris's inference is countenanced by the common account which makes the age of Lady

* *Adulterine Bastardy*, 293.

Elizabeth's next sister, Lady Frances, to have been at this date only thirteen. At the same time, it may perhaps be doubted whether the common assumption, here and elsewhere adopted by Sir Harris, that it was "then the custom to baptise children on the same day, or, at the farthest, three or four days after they were born," has not been taken up without sufficient investigation, at least in so far as regards the prevalence of any such custom in the sixteenth and early part of the seventeenth century among the higher classes. Is it really much or anything more than a dictum of Malone, or some of the other Shakespearian biographers or commentators, put forth under the influence of a wish to make out the probability of Shakespeare, who was baptised on the 26th, having been born on the 23rd, of April, the same day on which he died, and also the day consecrated to the national patron saint?

The history of Lord Knollys, for a number of years after his second marriage, is that of a sufficiently prosperous individual. On the 16th of April 1610 he obtained from the Crown a re-grant of the manor of Greys, to hold to him and Lady Elizabeth his wife, and the heirs-male of his body, in default of which to his brother's heirs-male. In October 1614 he was appointed Master of the Court of Wards. In May 1615, only a few months before the apprehension of his wife's sister for the murder of Overbury,* he was made a Knight

* "Neither my Lady Suffolk nor my Lady Somerset," said Mrs. Turner in a conference after her condemnation with Dr. Whiting on the 11th of November, 1615, "never received the communion. Oh, their greatness hath undone me; but if there were a religious man amongst them, it is my Lord Knollys."—*Amos*, 221.

of the Garter. And on the 7th of November 1616, six months after the trial and condemnation of Lady Somerset and her husband, he was created Viscount Wallingford.

Soon after this we begin to hear something of his wife. Chamberlain writes as follows, under date of the 19th of December 1618:—"The Countess of Salisbury the Friday before made a great feast and a play, though her husband were absent at Court, and the rest of her house and friends in sorrow about a lewd libel, that, excepting the highest [his Majesty], runs over all the Court and country, almost, that follows not their fashion; and, though the author cannot be found out, yet notice is taken that the Lady of Wallingford was one of the first that sung it; and the King thinks of her it may be required. I hear of another cross libel, that should pay her and all hers in the same coin; but, for my part, I protest I have neither seen nor seek after any of them, but only hear the general buzz abroad." Again, on the 30th of January 1619, Chamberlain thus records the circumstances which had attended the recent substitution of Lord Cranfield as Master of the Court of Wards:—"His predecessor, the Lord of Wallingford, is retired into the country, but was not sent empty away; for, besides the fee-farm of New-Elm Park, he hath somewhat else in consideration; and, when he delivered up his patent, the King told him, that, having been a long servant to Queen Elizabeth and him, he was loth to remove him; neither would accuse him of negligence, insufficiency, or corruption; but only he had one fault, common to him with divers others of his

friends and followers, which could not stand with his service nor of the state, that he was altogether guided and overruled by an arch wife." Rather a singular manner of sending a man not empty away.

If the common lists may be relied upon, Wallingford had also before this resigned or been deprived of his Treasurership of the Household. Edward Lord Wotton is set down as having been appointed to that office in 1616.* The ex-placeman, therefore, may possibly have been put about by the loss of his salary, to a degree for which New-Elm Park would be a very inadequate compensation. It was bad enough to be so much under the dominion of his wife, without being also turned out of his employment on her account. Perhaps his embarrassments and her ladyship's ascendancy together may have occasioned certain arrangements into which we find him entering soon after this. In December 1621 he obtained from the Crown a new grant of the manor of Greys to himself and his wife, to hold during their natural lives, *and for the life of the survivor of them*, with remainder, after the decease of both, to the heirs-male of his body, failing which, to his father's heirs-male, as before. And in February 1623 he obtained for himself and his wife, and the heirs-male of his father, still another grant of the manor of Greys, along with one of the manor of Cholcey (which, as already mentioned, had belonged to his father), and also of the manors of Whitley, Hackborne, and Aston Upthorpe, in Berks, of the preceptory of Sampford, and the manors of Horspath, Church Cowley, Temple Cowley,

* *Beatson*, I. 436.

Littlemore, and Essingdon, in Oxfordshire, and of Cheriton in Wilts, late parcel of the possessions of the dissolved monasteries of Reading, Cirencester, and St. John of Jerusalem; and to himself and his wife and his heirs-male, failing whom to his brother Francis and Lettice his wife and the heirs-male of Francis, failing whom to the heirs-male of his father, all the Park of Whitley, in the county of Berks. Lord Wallingford's landed possessions at this date, it would therefore appear, were still nominally of considerable extent.

It is difficult to believe that he could have felt himself in very straitened circumstances, when we find him a few years later taking a step in the peerage. On the 18th of August 1626 Charles the First made him an Earl, by the title of Earl of Banbury. The patent recited that his Majesty's father, "looking with royal regard to Sir William Knollys, Knight, then Treasurer of his Household and one of the Privy Council, first created him Baron Knollys of Greys; and afterwards, recollecting what great and acceptable services this William Baron Knollys had performed in the time of Queen Elizabeth for the Crown of England, and how he was related to her in blood, and with what great integrity, prudence, and fidelity he had conducted himself as Treasurer of the King's Household, and how many years he had enjoyed the office of Master of the King's Court of Wards with the highest honour, had raised him to the dignity and honour of Viscount Wallingford." * Then the patent went on to say that King Charles, also recollecting many other things done by

* *Case of Earl of Banbury*, 1808.

the said Viscount Wallingford in the service of his Majesty's father and himself, when at his royal coronation he resolved upon advancing some of his nobles to the honour and rank of Earls, had determined not only to include the Viscount Wallingford in the number, but to make him the first of the new Earls; and had only deferred doing so in consequence of his Lordship then labouring under an attack of illness which made it doubtful if he would live. In consideration of this previous intention his Majesty now granted the Earl of Banbury the same precedency as if he had then been advanced to the Earldom, or next after the Earl of Westmoreland and next before the Earl of Manchester.

This clause of precedency threatened for a time to prevent the new-made Earl from practically enjoying any precedency or place whatever where such distinction was accounted of the most importance. The first parliament after his advancement met on the 17th of March 1628; and the House of Lords had not been assembled for a week before the consideration of "the precedency granted to the Earl of Banbury before some other of ancienter creation" was referred to the Committee of Privileges. The subject occupied the House for about a month, during which the Earl did not attempt to take his seat. His Majesty hastened to send a message to the Committee by Lord Dorset, informing them of the circumstances under which the extraordinary privilege had been conferred. "The truth is," said Dorset, "that, his excellent Majesty having resolved to confer that dignity on that noble gentleman at the same time with the other then

advanced, he, being the first in quality of them, was consequently to have had the first creation; but, being at that time casually forgotten, and his Majesty afterwards remembered of him, he did but assign that rank which at first was intended, without the least thought of injuring any in the present, or ever to do the like in future. And, to conclude, I have further in charge to let you know that his Majesty desires this may pass for once in this particular, considering how old a man this Lord is, *and childless*, so that he may enjoy it during his time; with this assurance, that his Majesty will never more occasion the like dispute, but allow degrees to be marshalled according to the statute in that behalf." Dorset, by the bye, possibly went beyond his commission in these last words; for Charles made several other similar grants of precedency, one within a fortnight after this.* However, neither his Majesty's promise (if such was given) nor his request, nor both together, sufficed in the present case; the other peers who were interested in the precedency assigned to Banbury had all to be consulted individually before the matter could be arranged. The Earl of Berkshire, being first treated with (that is the expression in the record), answers, that, "out of his duty to the King, and in regard of his gracious message, and also out of particular respects to my Lord of Banbury (not concluding any other), he is willing to yield him the place as now he stands during the Earl of Banbury's life." The Earls of Monmouth, Darnley, Manchester, Totness, Mulgrave, and Marlborough, all consent in similar

* *Nicolas*, 342.

terms in the course of the week extending from the 2nd to the 9th of April; and even the Earl of Cleveland, who stood second in order, and who, when first applied to, although he was willing, "out of respect to the King's Majesty's desire," to give place to Banbury during his life everywhere else, had desired a respite till that day sevennight for his answer in regard to yielding the required precedency in the Parliament House, at last gets over his scruples. So on the 10th of April the House consents that Banbury "may hold the said place as he now stands entered for his life only; and that place of precedency not to go to his heirs;" and on the 15th he is brought into the House in his parliament robes, "and placed next to the Earl of Berks," that is to say, next above that Earl. It is a fact which curiously illustrates the change that has taken place in the system or spirit of English society, that a right which was thus denied to belong to the Crown under the feudal and comparatively despotic royalty of the early part of the seventeenth century is now generally admitted to be a part of the prerogative. But, after all, the change perhaps is more in appearance than in reality. Precedence has come to be a thing comparatively insignificant; even among artificial distinctions the one which our usages and modes of life bring the seldomest into view. In those days, when ceremonial displays were much more frequent, and everything was regulated upon a principle of formal observance, and artificial distinctions still maintained their ascendancy over all others, it was very different; precedence then met a man at every turn, and, fiction or shadow as it

may be deemed, was not more unsubstantial than some other shadows which even yet continue to be eagerly and universally pursued.

But to go on with the history of the Earl of Banbury and his wife. By this time, let it be kept in mind, he is an extremely old man, while she is still only in middle life. In November 1629 he is eighty-three or eighty-four, she only forty-three or forty-four. There is, as there has always been, a mighty gulf of forty years between the two. At this date, on the 3rd of that month of November, the Earl executes an indenture wherein he engages, "in consideration of the love and affection which he beareth unto the .. .. ..Lady Elizabeth his wife, having been always unto him a good and loving wife," to take such measures with regard to the manor of Caversham, with all its appurtenances, in the counties of Oxford and Berks, as shall enable him to settle the said manor on his wife, if she shall survive him, and so that her heirs and assigns shall hold and enjoy it after her. The parties to this indenture are himself and his wife on the one hand, on the other Henry Earl of Holland (the son of his niece Lady Rich) and Edward Lord Vaux. On the 19th of May 1630 he makes his will, by which he appoints his "dearly beloved wife" his sole and only executrix, leaving her all his goods and chattels, with the exception of £100 to one servant and £50 to another. There is no hint of the existence of any children, or child. In November of the same year he makes over the manor of Cholcey, after the death of himself and his wife, to the Earl of Holland. On the 4th of March 1631, having previously obtained

the King's licence, he agrees to alienate the manor of Rotherfield Greys to his next brother Sir Robert Knollys; and soon after he goes through the necessary form of levying a fine. On the 20th of April another indenture is executed by the Earl and his wife with certain fresh parties, for the purpose of settling Caversham upon the Countess and her heirs; and the necessary fine is levied in Easter Term of that year. Finally, on the 30th of April 1632, an indenture is executed between Sir George Whitmore, Lord Mayor of London, on the one part, and the Earl and Countess on the other, by which it is agreed that, if the Earl and his wife shall have paid the sum of £6000, and also the rent or sum of £480, by the 2nd of May 1633, Whitmore and those joined with him shall convey the manor, mansion, park, &c. of Caversham to the Earl and Countess, and to the heirs of the survivor of them. The £6000 was of course a mortgage held by Whitmore and his associates.

These various transactions would seem to indicate that, for all the property he had once been possessed of, the state of the Earl's affairs was far from flourishing when he died. Of the estates left him by his father he disposes of one, Greys, to his brother, of another, Cholcey, to Lord Holland, and upon a third, Caversham, he has raised a loan which may possibly have been nearly equal to its value. How he had got so involved, and so soon after his acceptance of a higher rank in the peerage might be taken to imply the possession of ample means, is not known. All that can be said is, that his several arrangements have apparently the

object of making the best provision possible for his wife, and for her alone. It is evident that, if the old Earl's disposition of the wreck or remnant of his fortunes was not actually dictated by his still comparatively youthful Countess, it is quite as favourable for her as it could have been if it had. Everything is left to her, or in her power.

The Earl, as appears from Pory's letter quoted in a preceding page, was understood to be dying in February 1632.* He did die on the 25th of May. Whereupon the widow immediately, or almost immediately, married Lord Vaux; she is described as his wife in an instrument dated the 2nd of July. At this moment, it is worth noting, her unhappy younger sister, Frances, probably lay on her deathbed; she was at least within a few weeks of the close of her strangely varied pilgrimage, begun under so bright a sky, which had suddenly been turned into so deep a gloom.†

By the instrument dated the 2nd of July, in which the Countess of Banbury, by which title she continued to be known to the end of her life, is described as now the wife of Lord Vaux, the manor of Caversham was conveyed to Vaux and certain other parties, and their heirs and assigns for ever. On the same day the Countess obtained probate of her late husband's will; but there is no notice in the probate of her being married again. It is probable, therefore, that the marriage was kept a secret for the present. It was not till the 11th of April in the following year that an inquisition was taken respecting the lands of which

* See *ante*, 327.

† See *ante* 318.

the Earl of Banbury had died seised; the jury, which sat at Burford, in Oxfordshire, found that the Earl's wife, the Lady Elizabeth, who survived, was, according to the above-mentioned indentures, entered upon and seised of the manors of Caversham and Cholcey, and of the only other landed property which the Earl had not alienated, a messuage of the extent of about three acres, called the Bowling Place, at Henley in Oxfordshire; and, further, that the Earl had died without heirs male of his body, and that his next heirs were Letitia Lady Paget and Anne Willoughby, the daughter and grand-daughter of his eldest brother Henry. Neither in this Inquisition is there any mention of his widow having become the wife of Lord Vaux.

So matters stood, as far as is known, for about eight years. Then in February 1641, we hear for the first time of a son of the late Earl of Banbury being in existence, born, it is said, on the 10th of April 1627. With a view of establishing the rights of this claimant, in regard to whom his friends had kept so quiet throughout so long an interval, and who was now in his fourteenth year, a bill to perpetuate testimony, and for the discovery of deeds and writings, was filed in Chancery, in the name or behalf of the boy, described as Edward Earl of Banbury, by his relation and guardian William Earl of Salisbury, who was married to his mother's sister. The bill professed to be specially directed against a certain Henry Stevens, who, it was alleged, retained possession of the Bowling-green at Henley, of which his kinsman John Stevens had obtained a lease from

the late Earl, and refused to pay the present Earl Edward any rent. To this charge Stevens makes as mild an answer as any plaintiff could desire in the circumstances. The rent, it seems, is only two shillings a year, and Stevens is quite ready to pay it, with all the arrears, as soon as it shall appear that the complainant is really the son and next heir of the late Earl, which he may be for aught that he, Stevens, knows to the contrary. Stevens is evidently a most convenient adversary; he could not have been more so if he had been made on purpose by the complainant or his friends. However, the movement was to a certain extent successful. The depositions of five witnesses were taken and recorded. Anne Delavall, the wife of Francis Delavall, of Caversham, Esq., aged forty and upwards, swore that she had known the plaintiff, Edward Earl of Banbury, from his birth; that he was born of Elizabeth Countess of Banbury, at her late husband's mansion-house of Greys, in Oxfordshire; that she remembered Earl William coming into the chamber where the Countess was a little before her delivery; that he desired persons to be sent for to give ease to the Countess; that the midwife was a Mrs. Price, of St. Giles's, Middlesex, believed by the witness to be since dead; that the child was during his nursing committed to the care of the witness, who lived in the house with the Countess; that, when she, the witness, afterwards removed to her own house, she took the child with her; and that while he was with her the Earl his father came to see him there, and desired her to take care of "his boy." Mrs. Delavall does not

appear to have stated or to have been asked either when or why it was that she and the child were thus removed from the house of its parents; nor, as her evidence is reported, is it clear whether she means to say that the Earl was afterwards in the habit of coming to see the child or only did so once. How long the boy remained in her charge is also left uninquired into. She had been a servant to the Countess for about thirteen years previous to the death of the Earl; and believed that the Earl and she during all that time lived lovingly as man and wife. Her husband, who was the next witness, and who is described as fifty-five years of age, deposed to no additional facts. He had been a servant and retainer to the late Earl for about twenty years preceding his decease. Neither did the third witness, Robert Lloyd, Doctor in Physic, aged fifty-six or thereabouts, state anything further, or anything at all of his own knowledge, with regard to the birth; but he had known and seen a good deal of the Earl and Countess for several years before the death of the Earl, and bore testimony to the affection in which they had lived. The Inquisition jury in 1633 had found that the Earl had died at Caversham; but Dr. Lloyd deposed that he was with his Lordship in the time of his last sickness, whereof he died, at Dr. Grant's house in Paternoster Row, London, to consult as a physician both with the said Dr. Grant and with Dr. Gifford. The fourth witness, Robert Clapham, gentleman, now servant to Henry Earl of Holland, and aged sixty years, had been servant to the late Earl of Banbury for about sixteen years before his death, and deposed to nearly

the same effect with Delavall. He declared that, even to the time of the Earl's decease, no man and wife could, in his opinion, live more lovingly and kindly together than his Lordship and the Countess did. Lastly, Margaret Kent, of Boughton, in the county of Northampton, widow, aged fifty years or thereabouts, had been a servant to the Countess for about five years before the Earl's death, had known the plaintiff from his cradle, and remembered the Earl coming to Mrs. Delavall's house and desiring her to take care and make much of his boy,—"all which the deponent did the better know, for that she, deponent, did at the same time look unto and attend to the said plaintiff under the said Mrs. Delavall." Mrs. Kent confirmed the other witnesses in averring that the Earl and Countess lived as lovingly together as man and wife could possibly do; adding that, as she remembered, the Earl, "in part of expression of his love to said Countess, would oftentimes stroke her face and take her by the hand, and familiarly call her *My Bessy*, and the like; and the said Countess did in like manner return the expression of her love to him again."

The taking of these depositions was immediately followed up by another proceeding. An order was obtained from the Court of Wards directing a new Inquisition to be held respecting the death of the late Earl, or rather directing an Inquisition to be now held as if for the first time; for the one which had taken place seven or eight years before was altogether ignored, or passed over in silence, in what was now done. The Inquisition was accordingly held at Abingdon, in Berkshire, on the

1st of April; when the jury found that the Earl at his death, which was now affirmed to have taken place in the City of London, was seised in fee of the manor of Cholcey and also of the messuage at Henley; that the Countess, his widow, had ever since received the issues of the former, and John and Henry Stevens the profits of the latter; and that Edward, now Earl of Banbury, who at the time of his father's death was five years, one month, and fifteen days old, was the late Earl's son and next heir.

The sole ground on which it can be contended that this finding is entitled to more regard than the former is that it is probably right in respect to the *place* where the Earl died. But very little, it is evident, can be inferred from what may have crept into either document on a point so wholly immaterial to the object of the inquiry. On the other hand, the omission of all mention of the manor of Caversham in the second Inquisition would seem to be a defect of the most suspicious kind.* Was the fact of the Earl and his wife having been seised of that manor at the time of the Earl's death suppressed in order to avoid the necessity of subjoining the awkward sequel, that in less than five weeks after his widow had parted with her sole control over it by taking to herself a new husband? It is remarkable that the second Inquisition is as silent as

* On this point Sir Harris Nicolas says, (p. 518, *note*);—"The property which it mentions was all the Earl held in the county to which the Inquisition related." But it has been previously stated at p. 291, and again at p. 294, that the manor of Caversham, as well as that of Cholcey, was in Berkshire, and even at p. 301, we find "the manor of Caversham, with all its appurtenances, in the counties of Oxford and Berks."

the first (though probably for a different reason) on the subject of the Countess's re-marriage with Lord Vaux. Further, two questions have been strongly urged;—Why were no measures taken to quash the first Inquisition? and, Why did not the new Earl of Banbury, or his friends for him, now that he was declared to be the late Earl's son and heir, proceed to recover from his uncle the family manor of Rotherfield Greys, which, he being in existence, his father had no legal power to alienate? Both these objections have been met with abundant ingenuity and courage by Sir Harris Nicolas; and he may be admitted to have shown that either of the two proceedings in question would have been attended with difficulties. The quashing of the first Inquisition he is inclined to think was unnecessary; and he contends that, as the law was then understood, the Earl of Banbury would probably have been held to have been entitled to dispose of the manor of Greys notwithstanding the existence of a male heir of his body. Still it does not appear that it would not have been worth while to try the latter question, if the finding of the second Inquisition jury could have been maintained. The truth, however, is, that in the trial of any question at law both Inquisitions would alike have gone for nothing; such proceedings, essentially *ex parte* as they were, operated only as convenient forms in ordinary cases, where it was merely desired to record certain facts which nobody disputed, but never were held to be conclusive, or of almost any weight or authority at all, in dubious or contested cases. In the present instance, the success of the obvious design of the second Inquisition

has every appearance of having been owing to the insignificant value of the only property the destination of which it actually affected. The Bowling-green at Henley, bringing a rent of two shillings a year, had never before been thought worth claiming by the late Earl's niece and grand-niece; they were perhaps ignorant of its existence; and now it was taken possession of by or for the complainant in the Chancery suit against Stevens, which also these ladies may very possibly never have heard of, without anybody attempting to interfere with him. The whole transaction was between the boy, or his relations acting for him, and their accommodating adversary Stevens. If proceedings had been taken to recover the manor of Greys, the case of the alleged son and heir of the late Earl of Banbury, and the grounds upon which his newly asserted position stood, would have obtained more publicity and a somewhat more thorough investigation.

As matters turned out, however, it was not upon the question of the rights or paternity of this first claimant that the case of the Earldom of Banbury eventually depended. He died a few years after he assumed the title, slain, Dugdale says, in a sudden quarrel on the road betwixt Calais and Gravelines. Evelyn, it appears from his Diary, found the young man travelling in Italy in January 1645; and his death took place before June of the following year, while he was still in his minority and unmarried. The Earldom would now, therefore, have been extinct beyond dispute, if he had been the only issue of its original possessor.

But lo! at this critical moment another and much

younger son, or pretended son, of the old Earl suddenly emerges into light. It is no doubt true that about five years before this time we hear of a "youngest son" of the Countess of Banbury; in June 1641 the Countess, who it seems had taken it into her head to turn Roman Catholic, and for some years after gave great uneasiness to the Parliament as a dangerous recusant, is recorded to have obtained a licence to travel along with such youngest son. Very probably this was the same child who was now brought forward as the youngest son also of the Earl of Banbury; but that he had ever hitherto passed as such must be held to be exceedingly doubtful. His first recorded appearance in that character is as one of the parties to an indenture, dated the 19th of October 1646, the other principal parties to which are his mother and Lord Vaux, and in which he is thus strangely and multifariously designated:—"the Right Honourable Nicholas now Earl of Banbury, son of the said Countess of Banbury, heretofore called Nicholas Vaux, or by whichsoever of the said names or descriptions, or any other name or description, the said Nicholas be or hath been called, reputed, or known." It seems plain from this that up to this time the name that the boy had commonly, if not exclusively, been known by had been the family name of Lord Vaux. If a thousand witnesses, brought up for a special purpose, or not so brought up, should be found to have afterwards sworn that he never was so called to their knowledge, this record would outweigh and confute them all.

However, from this time forward he is Nicholas Vaux no more, but, according to his own account and his

mother's, Nicholas third Earl of Banbury, the youngest son of William the first Earl, born on the 3rd of January 1631, when his venerable father was in his eighty-fifth year, and his mother in her forty-fifth. To abate somewhat the surprise naturally occasioned by this repeated productiveness at so late a season of a bed understood to have been barren for the first twenty years or more, we are informed that the Countess had in the first years of their marriage borne her husband a daughter, who died young. This is asserted by Milles in his *Catalogue of Honour*, published in 1610, and is likely enough, though the fact cannot be held to derive much confirmation from being repeated by Brooke in 1619 and by Vincent in 1622, and being introduced by Le Neve in a pedigree drawn up about 1698. It is possible, also, as Sir Harris Nicolas remarks, that the Countess may have had several other children previous to the year 1627, though nothing be known about them. She had, apparently, a somewhat mysterious way of going about such matters.

We shall come presently to the alleged circumstances of the birth of this Nicholas, calling himself Earl of Banbury. Meanwhile it may be noted, that, at a date not given, he had married Isabella eldest daughter of Montjoy Earl of Newport, the natural son of Lady Rich and the Earl of Devonshire; that, she having died, he took for a second wife, on the 4th of October, 1655, Anne daughter of William Lord Sherard of Leitrim; that the Countess of Banbury died on the 17th of April 1658; and that Lord Vaux followed her to the other world, leaving no legitimate issue, on the 8th of September

1661. His age is stated to have been seventy-four, which would make him to have been two years younger than his wife, even taking the latest of the two dates of her birth.

There is no reason to doubt that Nicholas continued to call himself Earl of Banbury from the time of his brother's death. He had no letter of summons or invitation to attend the Convention in April 1660; but he nevertheless presented himself in one of the early sittings of the restored House of Lords; and, although a few weeks afterwards, on notice having been taken that there was a person sitting in the House as a peer, who, it was conceived, had no title to that character, namely, the Earl of Banbury, it was ordered that the business should be heard at the bar by counsel on a subsequent day, no farther proceedings appear to have taken place during the session, throughout the greater part of which the questionable member continued his attendance. But what was thus done or passed over cannot possibly count for anything. It is true that the Convention itself passed an Act declaring itself to be a Parliament "to all intents, constructions, and purposes whatsoever;" but all that was afterwards done by the regularly constituted legislature was to confirm and ratify certain of its Acts, *of which this Declaratory Act was not one*. The notion of any sitting in that assembly affecting a claim to a peerage has probably been advanced in the present case for the last as well as for the first time. Nor can much be made of the fact that the formal consent of the Crown had been obtained in the course of the session to the bringing in of a bill

enabling the *soi-disant* nobleman to sell some lands for the payment of his debts, in which he styled himself his Majesty's "faithful and loyal subject, the Right Honourable Nicholas Earl of Banbury,"—the more especially as the bill was not proceeded with. It may have been stopped, for anything that appears, in consequence of this description.

When Parliament was summoned in May 1661, no writ was issued to the Earl of Banbury. This led at last to an investigation of the claim of the person so calling himself. A petition which he addressed to his Majesty, having been referred to the House of Lords, was referred by the House to the Committee of Privileges; and on Monday the 17th of June the Committee met and examined four witnesses in support of the claim. Only a very imperfect record or memorandum of the proceedings has been preserved; but, although with some little confusion, it probably exhibits all the material facts that were sought to be proved.

The first of the four witnesses is our old friend Mrs. Delavall, now, of course, aged sixty years and upwards. She appears to have sworn to the very day on which the claimant was born, the 3rd of January 1630 (or, as we should now say, 1631). Yet she was not present at the birth; for Lady Banbury, it seems, lay in, not at her husband's house, but at Harrowden, in Northamptonshire, the house of Lord Vaux. Nor was this the first time she had taken up her abode in that Lord's house. "The Lady," says this witness, "was there before to take waters of Wellingborough; but whether at this time [that is, whether she was drinking the waters at

this time], I know not. I dare say a child was born then of the lady." Does she mean that Lady Banbury had also probably been delivered of a child on her former visit to Harrowden? To the question, "Did she lie in publicly" (of the claimant?) she answers, "All the house she was in knew it." When asked whether the Earl saw the child, her reply is, "I was not there to know it."

So far, therefore, Mrs. Delavall can hardly be said to have testified to anything of her own knowledge. But she is further noted to have said;—"She knoweth nothing but that he was owned by the Earl of Banbury as his son. She knows nothing but that he knew she lay in." It is the strangest thing in the world how the plain and obvious meaning of these words has been missed by everybody who has quoted or referred to them on either side of the controversy. Can there be the shadow of a doubt that what Anne Delavall means to say, having been asked, whether the Earl acknowledged the child, and whether he knew of the delivery, is, that she knows nothing to the contrary of the child having been owned by the Earl—nothing *but* that he was owned by the Earl as his son, and nothing to the contrary of the Earl's having been aware that his wife was brought to bed—nothing *but* that he knew she lay in? The witness, nevertheless, is always assumed to have positively declared that the child was acknowledged by the Earl and that he was perfectly aware of all that was going forward;—as if she had said, "I know nothing; but I know that he was owned by the Earl of Banbury as his son. I know nothing; but I know

that he knew she lay in." Mrs. Delavall adds that the old Earl of Banbury "rode a hawking and hunting within half a year before his death, and all other sports."

The next witness, Mary Ogden, was present at the claimant's birth; and, though not present at the christening, "because she was not of their opinion" (meaning not of their religion, the ceremony having, it would appear, been performed after the Roman Catholic ritual), she had nursed him for fifteen months in the house at Harrowden. The child, therefore, never was taken home to his alleged father's house. Mary Ogden does not know whether the Earl of Banbury ever saw the child, nor whether he knew that his wife lay in; but he visited her. The child was called simply Nicholas, "and was carried ordinarily up and down the house." She will not say that strangers saw him; but the household did. Ever since she nursed him, she has "known him all along as her own child." Even after he grew up, if we will believe her, he never was called anything but Nicholas! She never knew him called Nicholas Vaux in her life.

From Anne Read, the third witness, little or nothing of any importance seems to have been extracted. She knows the claimant to be Lady Banbury's son. She and Ogden appear to have been both asked "Were you not enjoined to conceal his birth?" To which the answer, or summary of an answer, set down, is, "They know no cause of concealment." This may look a little like an attempt at evasion; but when the matter is further pressed, in a somewhat different form, "Were you not cautious to keep the child secret?" Read

answers, "I was never commanded to keep him secret." Perhaps she had the sense to act as the circumstances seemed to require, without any express command being necessary.

The last witness is Edward Wilkinson. He begins his testimony, with more zeal, it may be thought, than sound logic, by declaring that he knows the present Earl to be the son of Earl William, "because he was one year and a quarter old when William died." He had not, however, seen the now Earl till after his father's death. "What was this Nicholas called," he is asked, "at his father's death?" "He was called," Wilkinson boldly answers, "Nicholas Knollys:—what should they call him else?" But we know from better authority than such hard swearing as this that they did call him something else; we know from the recorded admission of his mother and of Lord Vaux, he himself, then in his sixteenth year, being also a party to the statement, that he had been "heretofore called Nicholas Vaux." Wilkinson goes on to declare that the old Earl and his lady agreed very well together; and he concludes his deposition by the admission, doubtless not drawn forth without some difficulty, "I know not that the Earl William did know that he left any issue."

What, then, are the real facts of the case? It is unnecessary to take into view circumstances calculated to excite an unfavourable prepossession; such as the stigma that might be supposed to attach to the Countess of Banbury as the sister of Lady Frances Howard, brought up under the same loose-principled or reputation-tainted mother, and her marriage with a man more

than three times her own age within three months after the death of his wife. Let everything of this inconclusive description be forgotten or overlooked. Let it be supposed too, if anything is thought to be thereby gained, that she may possibly have borne several children, of which we know nothing, to the Earl in the earlier years of their marriage. Let our attention be confined to a subsequent period,—to that commencing with the 10th of April 1627, the alleged birth-day of her son Edward. A childless man at the age of fourscore, her husband finds himself, as is asserted, the next year the father of a son and heir, and with the most unexpected prospect, as it must have been, suddenly opened to him, of transmitting his newly acquired Earldom and his other honours, all of which seemed about to die with him, in his own blood and lineage. How does the old man act upon so extraordinary an occasion? In no less extraordinary a way. It is not going too far to say that all possible pains appear to have been taken to conceal the birth of the child, and to leave its paternity doubtful. There is no registration of either its birth or its baptism. It is not even alleged that it ever was baptised. It is admitted to have been removed from the house of its pretended parents as soon as it was weaned; nor does it appear ever to have returned to the paternal roof. The utmost that is ventured to be affirmed is that the old Earl afterwards visited the woman to whose charge the child had been consigned at least once, and desired her to be careful of his boy. Yet he lived for more than five years after he had received this unlooked-for blessing from heaven. We

hear of his hawking and hunting almost to the last; but of his taking further interest in or notice of his boy, the child of his old age, the heir of his name, his honors, and his estates, we hear nothing. Mrs. Delavall can remember his visiting the child at her house; and that is all. The birth of a child to a man at fourscore is not, indeed, out of the range of nature, but yet it is a sufficiently uncommon event to be accounted something noteworthy and memorable in whatever circumstances. Here the circumstances were such as to make it impossible that it should not have been universally talked of, if it was not, for some reason or other, kept a secret from the world. The child that had so unexpectedly appeared was a son and heir. The father was a person of the highest rank and connexions, and of eminent personal distinction. There were not only extensive family estates to be preserved in his line by the birth of this boy, but various hereditary dignities to be preserved from extinction. The last and highest of these dignities, the Earldom of Banbury, had been conferred only a few months before the occurrence of the event which had thus, contrary to all probable anticipation, come to provide the means of its descending to perhaps the most remote posterity, instead of dying with the aged individual grantee. It had actually, as appears, been conferred in the notion that it would be only a peerage for a single life. If this had not been enough to attract observation to the fact of the birth, what subsequently occurred must have done so. According to the claim set up for this son and heir of Lord Banbury, he must have been not only in existence,

but very nearly a twelvemonth old, when, towards the end of March 1628, his Majesty sent Lord Dorset to the House of Lords to request that Banbury might be allowed to enjoy the precedence that had been assigned to him in his patent in consideration of his being so old a man *and being childless*. When the Earl was at last, on this pretence, permitted to take his seat on the 15th of April, he had, we are asked to believe, instead of being childless, been in reality the father of a son and heir for more than a year. Yet it is quite clear that none of his fellow peers at this time suspected anything of the kind. The order of the House, indeed, provided that the precedency granted to the Earl should not go to his heirs; but it is perfectly evident, from the entire course of the proceedings, that the heirs here contemplated can only have been such as might by possibility yet come into being.

It is surprising, considering the hardihood of the logic with which this case has been argued, that the advocates of the Banbury claim have never advanced what would appear to be, upon their hypothesis, the only explanation that can be given of this part of the case having any show of plausibility. It seems impossible to deny that the child asserted to have been brought forth by the Countess of Banbury on the 10th of April, 1627, was kept concealed for a considerable time after its birth, and was not generally either known or suspected to be the son of the Earl. Can any reason be assigned for this concealment which shall not be inconsistent with the paternity claimed for the child? The only such reason would seem to be that the

knowledge of its existence might not stand in the way of the precedency upon which the old Earl had set his heart, and his chance of obtaining which, as we have seen, depended upon his being thought to be childless. This is, at any rate, better than no reason at all.

But the difficulties of the case accumulate as we advance. The birth of the second child is attended with still more remarkable and more suspicious circumstances than that of the first. The aged father is now three years older. The child is not alleged to have been born even in its pretended father's house. The mother goes and is brought to bed in the house of another man, whose wife she becomes within a year and a half from the birth of the child, and within a few weeks after she has buried her superannuated, or at least extremely aged, first husband. The said first husband, the alleged father of the two boys, is not asserted by anybody to have ever seen or heard of this second one, though he lived for sixteen months after it came into the world, and though he is stated to have been in good health and able to enjoy the sports of the field till within half a year of his death. Meanwhile he has, since the date of the birth, or alleged birth, of the eldest of the two children, made various arrangements with regard to his property without the least reference to the existence of either; and he dies at last leaving a will in which he makes no mention of his having any issue whatever. Is all this, or one half of this, credible upon the supposition that the two boys long afterwards produced by Lady Banbury as the Earl's sons were really his? The question is not as to possibilities; it

certainly is not absolutely *impossible* that the children may have been the Earl's, notwithstanding all appearances to the contrary; but are we not driven by every consideration of *probability* to the conviction that they were not? Moreover, an Inquisition taken immediately after the Earl's death declares him to have left no issue. This finding is allowed to stand unquestioned, the two boys afterwards successively put forward as his sons continuing all the while in life, for the space of above eight years. At last, after that long interval, it is not openly challenged and attempted to be quashed, but, by a proceeding which wears all the appearance of collusion and trick, and which at any rate is of such a nature that no party has any interest in opposing it, even if anybody except the two make-believe adversaries by whom it was carried on can have been aware of what was doing, another Inquisition is obtained which asserts that the Earl left, not two sons, but one, namely Edward born in April 1627. No sooner, however, does he disappear from the scene, some four or five years after this, than up starts a so-called third Earl of Banbury, a pretended second son of the first Earl, a youth whom one bold swearer, indeed, declares to have been always known by the name of Nicholas Knollys, but whom his nurse, nevertheless, has ever since his birth known only by the name of Nicholas, and who in an instrument to which he is himself a party, along with his mother and her husband Lord Vaux, is described as having been "heretofore called Nicholas Vaux."

Surely here is an assemblage and accumulation of suspicious circumstances that is quite overwhelming

and conclusive. It is easy to take up the various improbabilities that have been enumerated one by one, and by so encountering them in detail to appear to dispose, more or less satisfactorily, of most of them. The circumstance of a man being beyond eighty years of age, for instance, is not of itself a sufficient reason for suspecting the paternity of a child borne by his wife, or, it may be, any reason at all in an ordinary case. A woman may perhaps in some cases rush into the arms of a second husband almost before her first is cold in his grave, and yet incur no imputation of previous infidelity. But either circumstance acquires additional significancy when it is associated with the other. The conjoint improbability is much greater than the sum of the two separate improbabilities. They must now be considered as being, not added together, but multiplied the one by the other. And so with every new circumstance of suspicion; it cannot be regarded by itself; it must be taken in combination with all the other circumstances of the same nature. Every one lends strength to every other. In this way the complex improbability resulting from all the various improbabilities of the present case becomes enormous. The great age of the alleged father,—the comparative youth of the mother,—the many years that the marriage had subsisted (as far as there is any evidence) without having been productive,—the sudden conversion of this barrenness into what we may call abounding fertility, one child born out of all reasonable expectation being followed by another still more out of the ordinary course of nature,—the concealment of the birth in both cases,

—the accouchement of the Countess the second time not in her husband's house but in that of Lord Vaux,—
—the fact of neither child having been reared in the Earl's house,—his unaccountable behaviour in all respects if he really knew of their existence and believed them to be his children,—his silence about them in his will,—the finding of the Inquisition jury that he had died without issue,—the precipitate re-marriage of the mother with Lord Vaux,—the long acquiescence of all parties in the first Inquisition,—the fact hardly to be questioned of the younger of the two boys at least having been brought up as the son of Lord Vaux and having for many years gone by his name—all these circumstances of suspicion, concurring and blending with one another, make up an amount of improbability, as attaching to the claim of the person calling himself Nicholas third Earl of Banbury to be accounted the son of the first Earl, nearly as great as moral demonstration admits of.

There was, however, another view to be taken of the question. There might be every reason for believing that the claimant was not really the son of Lord Banbury, and yet it might be contended that he was entitled by law to be accounted his Lordship's heir. Sir Harris Nicolas, in his very learned and elaborate Treatise, appears to have clearly shown that down to the time when this claim was first made, and to a much later date, the law of the land was that a child born in wedlock was always to be held the issue of the husband of the mother, except only when it could be proved to be absolutely impossible that the said husband could

be its father. The only thing that could protect the husband of the most notoriously profligate woman from being saddled with the paternity of all the children she might bring into the world was his having obtained a divorce from her (which divorce, however, if it was only by sentence of a court of law, did not dissolve the marriage, nor empower either party to marry again in the lifetime of the other.) In general the whole question was whether or no the husband had been within the four seas at the requisite date before the birth of the child. If he had, it was adjudged to be his. So rigorously was this rule originally maintained, that even proof of his having been locked up at the said date within the four walls of a dungeon availed nothing: no other *alibi*, however indisputably established, would serve except only his having been out of the island. This rule of the *Quatuor Maria*, or Four Seas, as it was called, appears to have subsisted in all its integrity till after the commencement of the eighteenth century; it was first shaken by a judgment of the Court of King's Bench in 1706, and was not completely exploded till 1732.* It had, no doubt, the merit of extreme simplicity, and would reduce most questions of disputed paternity to a very brief and commodious formula.

In conformity with this rule the Committee of Privileges to which the claim of Nicholas, calling himself third Earl of Banbury, was referred by the House of Lords in June 1661 resolved that, according to the law of the land, the claimant was legitimate; and they are recorded as reporting on the 1st of July "that Nicholas

* *Nicolas*, 126.

Earl of Banbury is a legitimate person." But their report implied nothing more than that the Committee believed the evidence which had been produced to prove that the claimant was the son of Lady Banbury, and that he was born in the life-time of her first husband. That evidence so believed was all that was required by the law to make him also the son of Lord Banbury. The numerous improbabilities which encumbered the claim could not be taken into consideration by the Committee. Its function was limited to the investigation and ascertainment of the legal fact. It could have no authority for so much as suggesting or hinting at any treatment of the case which would take it, no matter how strong might be the reason, out of the operation of the strict rule of law.

The House, however, felt itself to be in a different position. It did not adopt the Report of the Committee, but determined that the matter should be examined by the whole House. Accordingly more evidence was taken and counsel were heard; but on the 10th of July, after long debate, the subject was again referred to the Committee of Privileges. The Committee, having met on the 15th, agreed as before to report that the claimant, as it was expressed, *in the eye of the law* was *legally* the son of the late Earl of Banbury, and that the House should be recommended to advise the King to send him a writ of summons. The reference of the case would seem to have been understood to be in larger terms than on the former occasion. In particular, it comprehended the question of the precedence claimed by the *soi-disant* peer; and

upon this point the Report of the Committee bore that "the Earl ought to have place in the House of Peers according to the date of his patent, and not according to the tenor of that part thereof which ranketh him before other Earls created before him." It is impossible, however, to agree with Sir Harris Nicolas in inferring, simply from the question of precedency thus appearing to have been referred to the Committee, that the House, as well as the Committee, was at this time in favour of the claimant's right to be summoned to parliament.* If such had been the case, the controversy would have been at an end. There would have been no reference to the Committee at all. That the opinion of the majority of the House was opposed to the claim was shown by no vote in its favour having been come to after the first Report of the Committee, and still more decisively by the second Report also failing to be adopted.

In fact nothing more was done for the present. On the 30th of July the House adjourned till the 20th of November; and, the subject having been again brought forward eight days after it re-assembled, it was then resolved that the further consideration of it should be put off till the 9th of December. On that day a bill was brought in and read a first time of the following tenor:—"Whereas Sir William Knollys, Knight, of the most Honourable Order of the Garter, was in his life-time, by the grace and favour of our late sovereign Lord King James of blessed memory, created Lord Knollys of Greys, and afterwards Viscount Wallingford, and at

* *Nicolas*, 389.

last, by the further grace and favour of the late King Charles the First of blessed memory, was advanced unto the dignity and title of Earl of Banbury; and whereas the said Earl did in his old age take to wife Elizabeth late Countess of Banbury, which said Countess, during that coverture and intermarriage, had issue of her body Edward and Nicholas, who were never acknowledged by or known to the said Earl in his life-time as his children, he reputing himself childless, but their birth and breeding were altogether concealed from him, they, the said Edward and Nicholas, during the life of the said Earl and long after, being commonly called and known by the names of Edward and Nicholas Vaux; and about the space of a year after the death of the said Earl an Office or Inquisition was had and taken, whereby it was found by the oaths of the jury that the said Earl died without issue; and the said Countess many years after the finding of the said Office did first produce the said Edward and declared him Earl of Banbury, not pretending at that time to have any other issue male inheritable to the said Earldom; and after the death of the said Edward without issue she the said Countess did then produce the said Nicholas, and declared him likewise Earl of Banbury: Now, in respect of the notoriety of the fact, and to the end that a practice so much to be abhorred may receive a public discountenance, and others may therefore be deterred from the like for the future; and for that the illegitimation of children born in wedlock can no way be declared but by Act of Parliament; Be it therefore enacted by the King's Most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice

and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal and of the Commons in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, that the said Nicholas shall be and is hereby declared and enacted to be illegitimate to all intents and purposes whatsoever, and to be incapable and disabled to inherit any of the said honours and dignities, or any other honours, manors, lands, tenements, or hereditaments, as heir or heir male of the body of the said William Earl of Banbury. Provided always, that all conveyances and assurances whatsoever to which the said Nicholas hath been in any ways party or privy, or wherein the said Nicholas hath been any way mentioned by the name or style of Earl of Banbury, Viscount Wallingford, Lord Knollys, or any of them, and all legal proceedings wherein the said Nicholas is mentioned by the said names or styles, or any of them, shall be of such force and effect, and no other, as if this Act had not been made. And be it further enacted that the said Nicholas shall for the time to come be called and styled Nicholas Vaux, it being heretofore his reputed name, and he being seised of the greatest part of the estate of the late Lord Vaux, with whom the said Countess did intermarry after the death of the said William Earl of Banbury."

This may be taken to be a fair statement of the case as it was generally believed to stand. The preamble of the bill confirms Sir Harris Nicolas's account of what the law then was, by the affirmation that "*the* illegitimation of children born in wedlock can no way be declared but by Act of Parliament." At the same time it recites facts amply sufficient to justify the application

of the proper remedy for the wrongs occasionally resulting from such a state of the law.

In truth, the maxim that the marriage of the mother shall determine the paternity of the child—*Pater est quem nuptiæ demonstrant*—is suited only for the rudest condition of civilised society. Whatever may be argued in commendation of it on the ground of the simplicity and directness of its operation, it is impossible that a principle so purely formular or mechanical, so utterly destitute of any moral element, should continue to be accepted in its original integrity after an enlightened sentiment of justice has come to be generally diffused. The history of the maxim among ourselves demonstrates this. It is a history of corrections and qualifications. For a long time the expounders of the law cling tenaciously to their old dogma; and all that is done is, that, when a more than usually conspicuous wrong is wrought or in danger of being wrought, the supreme legislative authority interposes with a special enactment to prevent or remedy the mischief. A statute is passed declaring that in the particular case the maxim *Pater est quem nuptiæ demonstrant* shall not hold. It was not, it appears, till the reign of Henry the Eighth that we got even so far as this.* In England, whether from the

* There is, however, a remarkable case not noticed by Sir Harris Nicolas, which shows a disposition in parliament at a considerably earlier date to interfere with the adjudications of the ordinary courts as to such matters when the strict application of the letter of the law was held to work, or to be likely to work, a clear and gross injustice. The statute of the 9th of Henry VI. (1430), ch. 11, directing that Proclamation be made in Chancery before a writ be awarded to the Bishop to certify Bastardy, was occasioned, as is recited in the preamble, by an attempt then understood to be making by Eleanor, wife of James Lord Audley,

general spirit of our institutions, or from something in the character of the national mind, a maxim of law has been always the next most immoveable thing to a mountain. Then, again, the only original qualification of the principle, the rule of the *quatuor maria,* has been gradually more and more liberalised. The spirit of the rule has been substituted for its letter, exactly as has been done in other cases. It has been admitted that the husband may have been within the island, and yet so circumstanced as that it was as impossible for him to have been the father of the child as if he had been beyond seas. And now at last it seems to be admitted that the maxim which formerly was held to determine the paternity is to be regarded as availing no farther in any case than to afford a presumption as to that matter, —a presumption which may be overthrown, not merely by proof of the *impossibility* of its being true, but by any circumstances which may be thought to establish a strong *improbability* of its truth.

It would naturally be in the case of such an inheritance as a peerage that the old maxim would first be compelled to forego something of its inflexibility, and to submit to modification or check. In ordinary cases where it wrought even the most glaring injustice no

to get herself declared the daughter of Edmund late Earl of Kent by a pretended marriage between him and her mother Constance late wife of Thomas Lord Despenser. It is evident from the language of the statute, that, if the project of Lady Audley, (which, strictly speaking, was to get herself certified what the law calls *mulier*, a *status* entitling her to inherit equally with entire legitimacy), had been actually completed, instead of having been merely begun, the legislature would not have hesitated to interfere for the protection of the Earl's true heirs, by enacting that what had been done should go for nothing.

one was interested, no one was wronged, except the defeated party in the suit. He was only a private individual, without power or influence to procure redress, and in whose injury, indeed, the general public had no direct concern. It mattered nothing to the rest of the community whether the lands or goods which might be in dispute should be adjudged to belong to him or to his adversary. But a peerage, besides that the case would generally involve persons of the first consequence and influence in the state, was a public right, in which the whole community had an interest. It was impossible that a glaringly wrong assignment of such a right, no matter under what pretence of legal formalism, should be quietly submitted to either by the public or by the rest of the Peers, of whose order reputed purity of descent is the very basis and most essential element. We are accustomed to see private estates passing every day, by bequest, by sale, or otherwise, from hand to hand, from one family to another; but a peerage is by its very nature and constitution a possession consecrated to a particular blood and lineage, and the notion we have of it is as much outraged by its being assigned to the wrong person as it would be by the actual possessor being authorised in any particular case to dispose of it for what it would bring in the public market.

Let us just see how far the unmodified application of the maxim, that the child of a married woman is always, except under certain specified circumstances of impossibility, to be accounted the child of the husband, would carry us. There might be the clearest and most conclusive evidence of a different paternity, and yet he would

inherit according to the legal fiction. The evidence might be undisputed by anybody. The true paternity might be admitted on all hands; by the party himself, by his real father, by his mother, and by her husband, who was not the father, but whom the law insisted upon considering as such. The three sons and two daughters, for instance, borne by Lady Rich to Lord Montjoy were all by law as much the children of Lord Rich, and as much entitled to inherit his estates and honours, as the others of whom he was actually the father. So, in the present case, Lady Banbury might have openly proclaimed her profligacy; her husband might have transferred her to her paramour with the most ostentatious publicity; she might have lived with Lord Vaux for years without ever looking near her husband; Lord Vaux might have avowed himself the father of her children; still they would have been by law the sons of the Earl of Banbury. The law, in fact, if it was to be allowed to operate unchecked, left any peer who might be without an heir, and whose wife and himself might be sufficiently unprincipled, at liberty to procure one by means much more flagitious and otherwise objectionable than if he should have been empowered to sell the reversion of his peerage by auction. It gave to all peers who wanted heirs apparent the right of manufacturing them at will. It put it in the power of the actual holder of the honour in any such case to defeat the intention of the patent, whatever that might be. He had only to produce a male child born of the body of his wife, and after his death that son, no matter of what father, would step into the place

which he had occupied and succeed to the exercise of his legislative functions, snatching the peerage from the person really next of blood or in remainder, or giving it a continued existence when it would otherwise have become extinct. It is very possible that Lord Banbury would never have been created an Earl had it not been that his age was thought to offer a sufficient security that the peerage would be only for life; but in point of fact, if the rule of law was in all circumstances to be maintained, either the old man himself in concert with his wife, or his wife without his consent or knowledge (but yet in the full view of all the rest of the world), might transmit that and his other honours through an adulterous brood to the end of time.

Nor was this a mere possibility. Such attempts have been actually made, and have been defeated only by accident, or by the special interference of the legislature in the same manner in which it was proposed to interfere in the Banbury case. Edward Wortley Montagu, the son of the celebrated Lady Mary, is said to have advertised for a wife whose qualification should be that she was already in a condition to produce an heir to the family estates: if he had carried out his project nothing could have prevented the child so obtained from succeeding to the estates, if it had lived, except an act of parliament passed for the express purpose. Everybody remembers the case in which only a few years ago an act was passed to prevent the son of the wife of a living nobleman by another person from inheriting the peerage. What took place on this occasion strikingly illustrates the changed state of

opinion and feeling as to such matters which makes it no longer possible to maintain the old maxim of law in the despotism which it was allowed to exercise in an earlier and ruder age. The facts being all but undisputed and wholly indisputable, it was felt and admitted on all hands to be quite out of the question that the person pretending to the succession should compass his object. Lord Denman, in the debate on the second reading of the bill, declared that, from the moment he had seen the petition, he had felt "that, if the allegations were true, it was absolutely necessary that Parliament should interfere and prevent this monstrous scandal from proceeding." If it did not, it would be looked upon as giving encouragement to conspiracies of this description. He characterised the attempt which the bill was intended to meet as "an abuse disgraceful to a civilised country," as a "great and monstrous and preposterous and shameful grievance;" and he expressed his conviction "that no acts were more useful, or more satisfactory to the public," than such as the one proposed. Even Lord Cottenham, who opposed the bill, did so partly on the ground "that the strength of the case was an argument against the extraordinary interposition of the legislature which was now demanded." "If the case," he added, "were doubtful, if it depended on one witness, he might not say but that his opinion might be favourable to the interposition of the legislature. There might be circumstances which would justify the exercise of the power of this House, but it was when the facts of the case were not so strong as in this case." The second reading of the bill was carried

in the Lords by a majority of nearly seven to one, and in the Commons by more than three to one; and these two were the only divisions.* The only difference of opinion was as to the expediency of the course taken for thwarting the attempt of the claimant: the opponents of the bill contended that it might be safely left to be dealt with by the Courts of Law. A proposition to overlook everything except the simple fact of the pretended heir having been born of the nobleman's wife would not have been listened to, on either side, for a moment. In former times men felt differently. Whether from a strong sense of the convenience of a simple and infallible criterion, or from whatever notion, the prejudice was in favour of letting the marriage of the mother determine the whole question of the status of her offspring. The first acts of parliament which bastardised children born in wedlock were not obtained without much difficulty. Sometimes the attempt failed even when the circumstances seem to have been such as hardly to leave a doubt as to the children being actually what it was proposed to declare them. It had always, indeed, been held, as has been already noticed, that a divorce obtained in a court of law (the only kind of divorce known till towards the middle of the sixteenth century) deprived the wife of her otherwise legal right of inflicting upon her husband any children that she might in whatever circumstances bring into the world; and this principle would naturally help to reconcile people to such statutory declarations of illegitimacy as were

* *Hansard, Third Series, Vols.* 68, 69, 70.

accompanied by a dissolution of the marriage, which it is still the practice to grant only after a divorce has been obtained in the ecclesiastical court. Such a divorce satisfied the established legal maxim; to the effect of which, in so far as the children were concerned, the legislative enactment added nothing. But this was far from meeting every difficulty. Cases would occur calling for acts of illegitimation in which there could be no judicial divorce. The husband might not be in a condition to sue for a divorce, or might be indisposed to do so. The mother might be dead. Though she were not, the relief granted by the divorce in regard to the children might be insufficient. There might be ground for declaring the illegitimacy of children born before the divorce. In all these cases, although the prevalent feeling anciently was against interfering with the general principle of law, it is certain that now it would be quite the other way. If the child were clearly the offspring of adultery, however the courts might hold themselves bound to decide, the legislature would never hesitate, if called upon, to deprive it of the succession, and to secure whether honour or estate for the true blood.

The bill, however, which was brought in for declaring the illegitimacy of the claimant to the Earldom of Banbury in December 1661 was not proceeded with. The House of Lords had sufficiently shown its concurrence in the object of the bill by declining to address the Crown to issue a summons to the claimant, or to adopt the Report of its Committee which had affirmed him to be, if not actually, yet legally the son of the late Earl; the bill was therefore probably dropped from

there being reason to believe that it would be successfully opposed in the Commons. It appears that the influence of the Duke of York was exerted against the claim; and it might possibly be found that that circumstance was likely to operate against the bill in the Lower House. Although the bill was given up, however, the summons was still withheld by the Crown. Nor was any further movement made on either side for about eight years.

It was not till the 26th of October 1669 that, probably on the motion of some friend of the claimant, it was ordered by the House of Lords that the case should be again investigated by the Committee of Privileges. This was in the first session of parliament after Lord Clarendon had been driven from power; and Sir Harris Nicolas conjectures that Clarendon had gone along with the Duke of York in resisting the claim, and that it had probably been kept back so long from the hopelessness of obtaining a favourable decision or a fair hearing during his ascendancy in the House. The House, however, proved to be still as little disposed to admit the claim as ever. The Committee merely reported the proceedings that had taken place in 1661; a few months afterwards a petition which had been presented from the claimant was referred to the same Committee; but nothing farther was done. Then the affair went to sleep again. Nicholas calling himself third Earl of Banbury died on the 14th of March 1674, leaving his pretensions to a son Charles, baptised on the 3rd of June 1662.*

* *Nicolas*, 397. But perhaps it should be 1663; for in the next page Sir Harris says;—"Charles third [fourth?] Earl of Banbury attained his majority in June 1684."

Charles, calling himself fourth Earl of Banbury, petitioned the House of Lords on the 10th of June 1685. But the House was still obdurate and immoveable. The petition was, as usual, referred to the Committee of Privileges; and that was all. It might be thought that the circumstance of the old enemy of the claim being now King had had something to do with its failure; but it fared no better after the Revolution. It came again before the House in 1692 under singular circumstances. The claimant, having had the misfortune to kill his brother-in-law, Captain Philip Lawson, in a duel, was on the 7th of December in that year indicted for the offence by the name of Charles Knollys, Esq. He immediately petitioned the Lords, praying to be tried as a Peer. Counsel were heard for and against the petition on the 9th of January 1693; and then on the 17th, the question having been put "Whether the petitioner hath any right to the title of Earl of Banbury," it was resolved in the negative; and it was ordered that "the Petition presented to the House on the 13th of December last, by a person claiming the title of Earl of Banbury, shall be, and is hereby, dismissed this House." The matter, however, did not end here. The indictment for murder having been removed by *certiorari* into the Court of King's Bench, the defendant pleaded a misnomer, alleging that he was not Charles Knollys, Esq., but Charles Earl of Banbury. The Attorney-General was heard in answer to this plea; but in Trinity Term 1694 the Court, it is said unanimously, allowed it, and ordered the indictment to be quashed; upon which the defendant was set at liberty.

Lord Chief Justice Holt is stated to have argued that the House of Lords had no jurisdiction in cases of peerage, unless when, "upon a petition, the Crown refers the matter to them, which gives them a jurisdiction which before they had not;" and there had been no such reference in this case. Mr. Justice Eyre is reported to have said, without qualification, "that the defendant had a title to his honour by legal conveyance, and that it was under the protection of the common law, and could not be taken from him but by legal means; that the House of Lords could no more deprive one of a peerage than they could confer a peerage; that the defendant's right stood upon the letters patent and his legitimacy; that the letters patent could not be cancelled without a *scire facias;* and that the defendant could not now be proved a bastard or illegitimate."* The matter was soon after taken up by the House of Lords, and the proper officer of the Court of King's Bench was ordered to bring before the House the record of the indictment and the proceedings of the Court thereupon; but the question was afterwards adjourned from time to time, and for the present nothing farther was done.

Here, then, was a curious impracticability. There being different modes of trial appointed for a peer and for a commoner, and different courts in which the trial must be carried on, a case occurs in which a person charged with one of the highest felonies is held to be a commoner by the court for trying peers and a peer by that for trying commoners. The consequence is, that neither will have anything to do with him. If it had

* *Nicolas*, 415.

been the other way, if he had been allowed to be a peer by the House of Lords and a commoner by the Court of King's Bench, the difficulty would perhaps have been less. It would at least have been of a different nature. He would have had a chance of getting once tried, at any rate, if not twice. But, again, if the two courts had come to opposite conclusions as to his guilt or innocence, it might after all have been impossible to say what was to be done with him. As it was, nothing, apparently, could be done. There was nothing for it but to allow the alleged criminal to go at large, without his guilt being even inquired into. The crime with which he was charged, though called a murder, may have been one of which he would probably have been acquitted, or which would have assumed a much less serious character if the circumstances had been explained; but it would have been all the same whatever the crime had been. If it had been the foulest of murders, there could still have been no trial. It being impossible to decide whether the defendant was peer or commoner, he bore a charmed life in so far as regarded the jurisdiction of the criminal law. Many persons will think that such a privilege as this was something better than a peerage. He might have been brought up before the Court of King's Bench for a new felony every term, without the court being able to touch him. If he had acted upon this singular right of impunity, it might have become a matter of necessity to give him a peerage as the only way of stopping his career.

He himself, however, again advanced his claim to the Earldom in a petition which he presented to King

William early in 1698. His Majesty immediately referred the petition to the House of Lords. In the course of certain proceedings that followed, both Lord Chief Justice Holt and Mr. Justice Eyre were called before the House to give an account of what they had done in regard to the indictment for murder, and defended the course they had taken with great spirit; but the House, on its part, stood equally firm, satisfying itself with merely reporting to his Majesty the resolution and judgment negativing the claim of the petitioner which it had come to five years before. He again addressed Queen Anne in March 1712, stating that upon his indictment for the murder of Lawson he had been obliged to give bail as Earl of Banbury, and yet remained under the same, and praying that, if her Majesty should not be advised to send him a writ of summons, she would be pleased to give such directions to the Attorney-General as that the matter might be brought judicially (or by writ of error) before the House of Peers; the Privy Council, to whom the petition was referred, directed the Attorney-General to report upon it; but before he could do so the death of the Queen came and stopped all further proceedings. From this time the matter slept till after the accession of George the Second. Then, in the year 1727, the claimant to the Earldom of Banbury came forward with a new petition, in which he stated that "he had never met a favourable occasion to set his case in a true light until his Majesty's auspicious reign," and prayed that the Attorney-General might be directed to lay before his Majesty in council a full account of the proceedings

relative to the claim both in Parliament and in Westminster Hall, that his Majesty might be truly apprised of the justice of the petitioner's case, and that he might be relieved accordingly. The petition was referred to the Attorney-General, Sir Philip Yorke (afterwards Earl of Hardwicke), who made his report upon it; but he only went the length of observing that whether, under the circumstances, a new reference should be made to the House of Lords was a consideration, not of law, but of prudence, which must be left to his Majesty's royal determination. No such reference was made by the Crown. This fifth attempt was the petitioner's last. Charles Earl of Banbury, as he always called himself, died in France about August 1740; a son William by his first wife, Elizabeth Lister, who was known as Viscount Wallingford, predeceased him by about two months; but he left, by his second wife, Mary daughter of Thomas Woods, of London, merchant, another son named Charles, born before the year 1710.

This second Charles, who now assumed the title, was, it appears, in holy orders; his death in March 1771 is recorded in the burial register of Burford in Oxfordshire, where he is described as "the Right Honourable and Reverend Charles Knollys, Earl of Banbury, Viscount Wallingford, and Baron Knollys of Greys, one-and-twenty years Vicar of this parish." The Vicar of Burford was probably a quiet and unambitious man; he lived and died without having made any movement towards renewing the contest for the recognition of the family pretensions in which his father had been so often foiled. He left a large family, however, to inherit his

claims. In the Chronicle of the *Annual Register* for May 1760 we read the following paragraph:—"It is remarkable that five sons of the Earl of Banbury have been among the foremost in action for the service of their king and country within a few months past; Lord Wallingford, the eldest son, having received a wound at Carrickfergus; the second wounded at the taking of Guadaloupe; the third, Lieutenant Knollys, killed in the late engagement with two French frigates off Lisbon; and the fourth and fifth both very much wounded at Minden." By his wife Martha, who survived him only about six months, the Vicar had also at least two daughters.*

His eldest son William, calling himself the sixth Earl, after having attained the rank of a Lieutenant-Colonel in the army, died unmarried in his brother's house at Burford in August 1776; upon which the title was assumed by that next brother, Thomas Woods Knollys. He died in his house at Winchester in March 1793, and lies buried in the Cathedral there. He "was," says the *Annual Register*, "a most respectable magistrate and country gentleman; but his estates were too small to permit a town residence, or to give him the usual state of a nobleman." His eldest son William, who had been previously known as Viscount Wallingford, now called himself the eighth Earl of Banbury.

At this time the inheritor of the disputed peerage was a Lieutenant in the Third Regiment of Foot Guards; he eventually rose to be a General.† By him

* *Case of William Earl of Banbury*, 1808.

† He and the Duke of Wellington were promoted to the rank of Major-General on the same day, the 11th of May, 1802.

the demand for a legal recognition of the honour was once more brought forward after a lapse of nearly eighty years. He petitioned the Crown to that effect in 1806. In his *Case*, as afterwards submitted to the House of Lords, it was observed that since his father's death in 1793 there had occurred urgencies which rendered it peculiarly incumbent upon the present claimant "to maintain his possession of the Banbury Earldom to the full extent of enforcing his right to be summoned as a peer to parliament." "His father the late Earl," the statement went on, "had the honour of being an officer in his Majesty's Third Regiment of Foot previously to his succeeding to the Earldom; and the now petitioner was brought up in the army, and has now the honour of being a Major-General in his Majesty's service. Whilst the petitioner's father was living, the petitioner, under the established courtesy as to sons and heirs apparent of Earls, was styled William Knollys commonly called Viscount Wallingford. But on his father's death, and the consequential descent of the Earldom of Banbury to the now petitioner, the style of a Viscount by courtesy became inapplicable to him; and, with the Earldom so descended upon him, his having recently taken a commission from his Majesty under the description of William Knollys claiming the title of Earl of Banbury, though even so commissionating the petitioner somewhat approaches to the Crown's considering the petitioner as entitled to the Earldom, might be prejudicial to himself and family, unless, by subsequent conduct of a decisive kind, he should evince, that, in accepting promotion from the Crown under such a

qualified description of him with reference to his Earldom, he only acted in submission to the urgency of his military situation, and to the pleasure of his most gracious Sovereign."

The Petition was referred by the Crown to the consideration of Sir Arthur Pigott, the Attorney-General; but the report upon it was made in January, 1808, by Sir Arthur's successor, Sir Vicary Gibbs. Two questions seemed to Sir Vicary to be involved in the case;—the first, whether the resolution of the House of Lords in 1693 was a conclusive judgment against the claim; the second, whether, supposing that judgment not to have settled the question, the present petitioner had made out his right. In regard to the first, looking to the proceedings in the Court of King's Bench resulting in the granting of the indictment found against the then claimant by the name of Charles Knollys, Esquire, which judgment might have been removed by a writ of error to the House of Lords, and there reversed if it was erroneous, but which no steps were taken for so reversing, he felt himself bound to report his opinion that the resolution of the House of Lords in 1693 was not to be held as conclusive. "Upon the second question," he added, "it appears to me that the grant of this dignity to William the first-named Earl, his sitting in the House of Lords as Earl of Banbury, his marriage with the Lady Elizabeth, the birth of Nicholas, who is stated to be his second son, during that marriage, and the several branches of the descent from Nicholas to the petitioner, are satisfactorily proved; but that the legitimacy of Nicholas is left in a considerable

degree of doubt." Sir Vicary, in these circumstances, recommended that the petition should be referred to the House of Lords.

The case occupied the Committee of Privileges for three days in 1808, six in 1809, eight in 1810, and thirteen in 1811. The claim of the petitioner enjoyed the able advocacy of Sir Samuel Romilly, Mr. Hargrave, and Mr. (afterwards Justice) Gazelee. Nothing was done in 1812. The main debate took place on the 26th of February 1813. The claim having been opposed at great length by Lord Redesdale, Lord Ellenborough, and Lord Eldon, and supported, certainly with eminent ingenuity and skill, by Lord Erskine, the vote was taken, when it was carried by a majority of 21 to 13 that in the opinion of the Committee the petitioner had not made out his claim. This resolution, having been reported to the House on Thursday the 11th of March, was ordered to be taken into consideration on the Monday following. On that day, the 15th, the House not only resolved, on the motion of the Duke of Norfolk, to agree with the report of the Committee of Privileges; but further resolved and adjudged "That the Petitioner is not entitled to the Title, Honour, and Dignity of Earl of Banbury," thus, apparently, placing a bar against any re-agitation of the claim. A long Protest, drawn up by Lord Erskine, against this decision was afterwards entered on the Journals, and, besides his Lordship's signature, received those of their Royal Highnesses the Dukes of Kent, Sussex, and Gloucester, and of Lords Nelson, Ashburton, Ponsonby, Hastings, Hood, and Dundas. General Knollys, who held the appointment

of Governor of Limerick, died at Paris on the 20th of March 1834, but left a son, Lieutenant-Colonel Knollys, of the Scots Fusileer Guards, who, designating himself "the present Claimant," published in 1835 a pamphlet entitled "Some Remarks on the Claim to the Earldom of Banbury," but has not taken any further step to establish his pretensions. The titles of Earl of Banbury and Viscount Wallingford, by which General Knollys and his son had been previously known, were dropped by both after the decision of the House of Lords in 1813.

# APPENDIX.

## No. I.

*Unpublished Letters relating to the Death of the Lady Robert Dudley (Amy Robsart).*

Since the note on page 56 was printed off, I have been kindly permitted to make further search among the Manuscripts in the Pepysian Library, and have been fortunate enough to discover what there can be no doubt is the document that has been described as an account of the Coroner's Inquest held upon the Lady Robert Dudley. It is, in fact, a copy of a correspondence between Dudley and an agent of his at Cumnor while the Inquest was going on. There are five Letters; three from Dudley, and two from the other party. Such a correspondence may claim to be regarded as something much more curious and important than even the depositions taken at the Inquest, which, if we had them, would in all likelihood tell us little or nothing more than is to be gathered from the Letters, or from the local traditions which Ashmole has collected and preserved. The finding of the Jury no doubt was that the death had happened by mischance. But here we have Dudley himself and his own words, which, even if they should have been designed to blind us in regard to some other things, at least throw the clearest light upon the relations in which he and his unfortunate wife stood to one another at the time of the catastrophe. It is evident from the whole tenor of his letters that all affection on his side had for some time ceased; and there are indications of this alienation having been a source to her of deep suffering. Writing, with whatever present or ultimate purpose, to a person in his confidence, and who must be supposed to have been aware of the real state of the case in that respect, he affects no lamentation for the loss he has sustained. He professes to be surprised at

the news of his wife's death and to be shocked at the thought of her having possibly been murdered, and he is especially alarmed by the apprehension that he may be suspected to have been himself the main author of the crime; that is all. That his position, if not his character or reputation, was such as to make such a notion one very likely to be taken up by the world, we have now the frankest acknowledgment under his own hand. The correspondence also adds something to the little previously known in regard to the sort of person that Amy Robsart really was, and upon that point confirms the only other evidence we possess, the solitary fragment that remains of her own letter-writing.

The copy of the present Letters which is preserved in the Pepysian Library was probably made soon after the originals had been written, and perhaps by Dudley's own direction. It appears to have been one of certain papers which had originally belonged to him, and which were obtained by Pepys from his friend Evelyn. In his Diary, under date of 24th November 1665, Pepys records a visit he had paid to Evelyn, when the latter showed him "several letters of the old Lord of Leicester's in Queen Elizabeth's time, under the very hand-writing of Queen Elizabeth and Queen Mary Queen of Scots, and others, very venerable names." Some of these old papers he appears to have afterwards borrowed of Evelyn. The latter writes to him on the 8th of December 1681;—"These papers, maps, letters, books, and particulars, when you have done with, be pleased to take your own time in returning;" and one of the entries in a catalogue or list appended to the copy that Evelyn had preserved of the letter is; "The Earl of Leicester's Will. Another packet of Letters and other matters, and transactions of state relating to the late times, in number 88." (*Memoirs*, II., 217—219.) On the margin, however, Evelyn had afterwards noted;—"Which I afterwards never asked of him;" and Pepys appears to have ultimately come to look upon the papers as his own. They probably form the bulk of the contents of three large folio volumes now in the Pepysian Library, lettered on the back PAPERS OF STATE. The present Letters are in Vol. II. pp. 703—711.

1. *Lord Robert Dudley to T. Blount.*

" Cousin Blount, Immediately upon your departing from me, there came to me Bowes, by whom I do understand that my wife is dead, and, as he saith, by a fall from a pair of stairs. Little other understanding can I have of him. The greatness and the suddenness of the misfortune doth so perplex me, until I do hear from you how the matter standeth, or how this evil should light upon me, considering what the malicious world will bruit, as I can take no rest. And, because I have no way to purge myself of the malicious talk that I know the wicked world will use, but one, which is, the very plain truth to be knowen, I do pray you, as you have loved me, and do tender me and my quietness, and as now my special trust is in you, that [you] will use all the devises and means you can possible for the learning of the troth; wherein have no respect to any living person. And, as by your own travail and diligence, so likewise by order of law; I mean, by calling of the Coroner, and charging him to the uttermost from me to have good regard to make choice of no light or slight persons, but the discreetest and [most] substantial men, for the juries, such as for their knowledge may be able to search thoroughly and duly, by all manner of examinations, the bottom of the matter, and for their uprightness will earnestly and sincerely deal therein without respect; and that the body be viewed and searched accordingly by them; and in every respect to proceed by order and law. In the mean time, Cousin Blount, let me be advertised from you by this bearer with all speed how the matter doth stand. For, as the cause and the manner thereof doth marvellously trouble me, considering my case, many ways, so shall I not be at rest till I may be ascertained thereof; praying you, even as my trust is in you, and as I have ever loved you, do not dissemble with me, neither let any thing be hid from me, but send me your true conceit and opinion of the matter whether it happened by evil chance or by villany. And fail not to let me hear continually from you. And thus fare you well, in much haste; from

Windsor, this ix$^{th}$ of September in the evening. Your loving friend and kinsman, much perplexed, R. D.

"I have sent for my brother Appleyard, because he is her brother, and other of her friends also to be there, that they may be privy and see how all things do proceed."

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*2. T. Blount to Lord Robert Dudley.*

"May it please your Lordship to understand that I have received your letter by Bristo, the contents whereof I do well perceive; and that your Lordship was advertised by Bowes upon my departing that my Lady was dead; and also your strait charge given unto me that I should use all the devises and policies that I can for the true understanding of the matter, as well by mine own travail as by the order of law, as in calling the Coroner, giving him charge that he choose a discreet and substantial jury for the view of the body, and that no corruption should be used or person respected. Your Lordship's great reasons, that maketh you so earnestly search to learn the troth, the same, with your earnest commandment, doth make me to do my best therein. The present advertisement I can give to your Lordship at this time is, too true it is that my Lady is dead, and, as it seemeth, with a fall; but yet how or which way I cannot learn. Your Lordship shall hear the manner of my proceeding since I cam from you. The same night I cam from Windsor I lay at Abingdon all that night; and, because I was desirous to hear what news went abroad in the country, at my supper I called for mine host, and asked him what news was thereabout, taking upon me I was going into Gloucestershire. He said, there was fallen a great misfortune within three or four miles of the town; he said, my Lord Robert Dudley's wife was dead; and I axed how; and he said, by a misfortune, as he heard, by a fall from a pair of stairs. I asked him by what chance; he said, he knew not. I axed him what was his judgment, and the judgment of the people; he said, some were disposed to say well and some evil. What is your judgment? said I. By my troth, said he, I judge

it a misfortune, because it chanced in that honest gentleman's house; his great honesty, said he, doth much cut (?) the evil thoughts of the people. My think, said I, that some of her people that waited upon her should somewhat say to this. No, Sir, said he, but little; for it was said that they were all here at the fair, and none left with her. How might that chance? said I. Then said he, It is said how that she rose that day very early, and commanded all her sort to go [to] the fair, and would suffer none to tarry at home; and thereof is much judged. And truly, my Lord, I did first learn of Bowes, as I met with him coming towards your Lordship, of his own being that day, and of all the rest of their being, who affirmed that she would not that day suffer one of her own sort to tarry at home, and was so earnest to have them gone to the fair, that with any of her own sort that made reason of tarrying at home she was very angry, and cam to Mrs. Odingstells (?), the widow that liveth with Anthony Forster, who refused that day to go to the fair, and was very angry with her also, because she said it was no day for gentlewomen to go in, but said the morrow was much better, and then she would go. Whereunto my Lady answered and said that she might choose and go at her pleasure, but all hers should go; and was very angry. They asked who should keep her company if all they went. She said Mrs. Owen should keep her company at dinner. The same tale doth Pirto, (?) who doth dearly love her, confirm. Certainly, my Lord, as little while as I have been here, I have heard divers tales of her that maketh me judge her to be a strange woman of mind. In asking of Pirto what she might think of this matter, either chance or villany, she said, by her faith she doth judge very chance, and neither done by man nor by herself. For herself, she said, she was a good virtuous gentlewoman, and daily would pray upon her knees; and divers times she saith that she hath heard her pray to God to deliver her from desperation. Then, said I; she might have an evil toy (?) in her mind. No, good Mr. Blount, said Pirto, do not judge so of my words; if you should so gather, I am sorry I said so much. My Lord, it is most strange that this chance should fall upon you. It passeth the judgment of any man to say how it is; but truly the tales I

do hear of her maketh me to think she had a strange mind in her; as I will tell you at my coming.

"But to the inquest you would have so very circumspectly chosen by the Coroner for the understanding of the troth, your Lordship needeth not to doubt of their well choosing. Before my coming the most were chosen, and part of them at the house. If I be able to judge of men and of their ableness, I judge them, and specially some of them, to be as wise and as able men to be chosen upon such a matter as any men, being but country men, as ever I saw, and as well able to answer to their doing before whosoever they shall be called. And for their true search, without respect of person, I have done your message unto them. I have good hope they will conceal no fault, if any be; for, as they are wise, so are they, as I hear, part of them, very enemies to Anthony Forster. God give them, with their wisdom, indifferency, and then be they well chosen men. More advertisement at this time I cannot give your Lordship; but as I can learn so will I advertise, wishing your Lordship to put away sorrow, and rejoice, whatsoever fall out, of your own innocency; by the which, in time, doubt not but that malicious reports shall turn upon their backs that can be glad to wish or say against you. And thus I humbly take my leave; from Comner, the xi$^{th}$ of September. Your Lordship's, life and living, T. B.

"Your Lordship hath done very well in sending for Mr. Appleyard."

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### 3. *Lord Robert Dudley to T. Blount.**

"Cousin Blount, Until I hear from you again how the matter falleth out in very troth, I cannot be in quiet; and yet you do well satisfy me with the discreet jury you say are chosen already; unto whom I pray you say from me, that I require them, as ever I shall think good of them, that they will, according to their

* This is placed as the last of the five letters in the copy in the Pepysian Library, by a mistake made either in the transcription or in the subsequent arrangement of the sheets.

duties, earnestly, carefully, and truly deal in this matter, and find it as they shall see it fall out; and, if it fall out a chance or misfortune, then so to say; and, if it appear a villany (as God forbid so mischievous or wicked body should live), then to find it so. And, God willing, I have never fear [of] the due prosecution accordingly, what person soever it may appear any way to touch; as well for the just punishment of the act as for mine own true justification; for, as I would be sorry in my heart any such evil should be committed, so shall it well appear to the world my innocency by my dealing in the matter, if it shall so fall out. And therefore, Cousin Blount, I seek chiefly troth in this case, which I pray you still to have regard unto, without any favour to be showed either one way or other. When you have done my message to them, I require you not to stay to search thoroughly yourself all ways that I may be satisfied. And that with such convenient speed as you may. Thus fare you well, in haste; at Kew, this xii$^{th}$ of September. Yours assured, R. D."

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4. *T. Blount to Lord Robert Dudley.**

"I have done your Lordship's message unto the jury. You need not to bid them to be careful: whether equity of the cause or malice to Forster do forbid [?] it, I know not; they take great pains to learn the troth. To morrow I will wait upon your Lordship; and, as I come, I will break my fast at Abingdon; and there I shall meet with one or two of the jury, and what I can I will bring. They be very secret; and yet do I hear a whispering that they can find no presumptions of evil. And, if I may say to your Lordship my conscience, I think some of them be sorry for it, God forgive me. And, if I judge aright, mine own opinion is much quieted; the more I search of it, the more free it doth appear unto me. I have almost nothing that can make me so much to think that any man should be the doer thereof as, when

* In the volume in the Pepysian Library the next letter precedes this.

I think your Lordship's wife before all other women should have such a chance, the circumstances and as many things as I can learn doth persuade me that only misfortune hath done it, and nothing else. Myself will wait upon your Lordship to-morrow, and say what I know. In the mean time I humbly take leave; from Comner, the xiii$^{th}$ of September. Your Lordship's, life and loying [?], T. B."

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5. *Lord Robert Dudley to T. Blount.*

"I have received a letter from one Smith, one that seemeth to be foreman of the jury. I perceive by his letters that he and the rest have and do travail very diligently and circumspectly for the trial of the matter which they have charge of, and; for any thing that he or they by any search or examination can make in the world hitherto, it doth plainly appear, he saith, a very misfortune; which, for mine own part, Cousin Blount, doth much satisfy and quiet me. Nevertheless, because of my thorough quietness, and all other's hereafter, my desire is that they may continue in their inquiry and examination to the uttermost, as long as they lawfully may; yea, and when these have given their verdict, though it be never so plainly found, assuredly I do wish that another substantial company of honest men might try again for the more knowledge of troth. I have also requested to Sir Richard Blount, who is a perfect honest gentleman, to help to the furtherance thereof. I trust he be with you or thing long *, with Mr. Norris likewise. Appleyard, I hear, hath been there, as I appointed, and Arthur Robsert, her brothers. If any more of her friends had been to be had, I would also have caused them to have seen and been privy to all the dealing there. Well, Cousin, God's will be done; and I wish he had made me the poorest that creepeth on the ground, so this mischance had not happened to me. But, good Cousin, according to my trust

* Here there seems to be a corruption of the text; but the meaning is obvious.

have care about all things, that there be plain, sincere, and direct dealing for the full trial of this matter. Touching Smith and the rest, I mean no more to deal with them, but let them proceed in the name of God accordingly; and I am right glad they be all strangers to me. Thus fare you well, in much haste; from Windsor. Your loving friend and kinsman, R. D."

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I can find no trace of relationship between any branch of the Blount family and Dudley in Sir Alexander's Croke's work. But that such relationship did exist appears both from the present correspondence and from the account of Sir Christopher Blount in the letters of his friend Morgan. It may be inferred that the T. Blount of the correspondence was of the same branch with Sir Christopher; possibly he may have been Thomas Blount of Kidderminster, whom I have supposed to have been Sir Christopher's father. The Sir Richard Blount mentioned in the last letter was probably the person of that name who died Lieutenant of the Tower in 1564. He was son of Richard Blount of Ivor in Bucks, which manor he had acquired by marriage with the daughter and heir of William Delaford, Esq. From Sir Michael Blount, the son of Sir Richard, who was also Lieutenant of the Tower, came the Blounts of Maple-Durham, of which family were Pope's two friends Martha and Teresa Blount. Of that house, also, was the mother of Sir John St. John, the great-great-grandfather of his friend Bolingbroke. And Pope himself, if, as some of his biographers have asserted, he was of the same family with Sir Thomas Pope, the founder of Trinity College, Oxford, and the progenitor of the Popes Earls of Downe (in the Irish peerage), may have been connected by descent with another branch of the Blounts, those of Sodington in Worcestershire, one of whom intermarried with a Pope, from which connexion the two names became united in Sir Thomas Pope Blount, the author of the *Censura Authorum*, and other persons of the same line.

## No. II.

*Prevailing Error respecting the Law of Divorce:—Foljambe's Case.*

There can be no doubt as to what the law of England actually is on the subject of Divorce. It is now completely settled, and admitted on all hands, that nothing but the special interference of the legislature, by an Act of Parliament, can completely release from their bond parties who have entered into matrimony in such circumstances as that the marriage was good at the time when it was contracted. If a man should marry his sister, the marriage would be bad from the beginning, would in fact be no marriage, and, if it were questioned, would be found and declared to be null and void. So of any other kind of marriage, or pretended marriage, contracted between parties in circumstances in which the law holds that there can be nó valid marriage, or none that can be maintained if questioned. In such cases the marriage is not so properly speaking dissolved as declared never to have existed. The sentence is one, not of divorce, but of nullity. In all other cases the law can grant no complete divorce for any cause whatever. The legislature may grant such a divorce, as it may grant any other extraordinary privilege. It may give a man the power of putting his wife away and taking another, as it might give him the power of putting her to death. But, when that is done, it is a special indulgence accorded in the particular case. It is a new law passed. The law as it actually exists knows no such thing as a divorce *à vinculo matrimonii*, or from the bond of matrimony, for any cause whatever arising subsequent to the marriage. The only divorce that it can grant even for adultery is what is called a divorce *à mensâ et thoro*, a separation from bed and board; and such a divorce or separation does not permit either party to marry again in the lifetime of the other.

Although the subject is, in so far, simple enough, and not embarrassed by any sort of question or doubt, so much of explanation may perhaps be excused in consideration of the

indistinct notions in regard to it that one not unfrequently encounters, sometimes in quarters that might be expected to be better informed. We find the late Sir Alexander Croke, for instance, a Doctor of Civil Law, thus commenting upon the conduct of Laud in marrying Lady Rich to the Earl of Devonshire after her divorce from Lord Rich:—"If a legal divorce had taken place, as is stated, I do not see in what Laud was so culpable." (*Hist. of Croke Family*, II. 240). Sir Alexander, we see, innocently supposed a legal divorce (meaning a divorce in the ecclesiastical court) to be a complete release from the matrimonial bond.

But, although there can be no dispute as to how the law now stands, there is an important portion of the history of the law which would appear to be in recent times very generally, if not universally, misunderstood and misstated. As this matter bears directly upon a principal incident in the narrative which fills the greater part of the present volume, and is besides somewhat curious in itself, it is worth the endeavouring to investigate and clear up.

Let us first see, then, what the common statement is.

Turning to the article *Divorce* in a popular work of high reputation, we find the following passage:—"We know (3 Salk. *Rep.* 138) that until the 44th Eliz. a divorce *à vinculo matrimonii* might be had in the ecclesiastical courts for adultery; but in Foljambe's case, which occurred in that year in the Star Chamber, Archbishop Bancroft, upon the advice of divines, held that adultery was only a cause of divorce *à mensâ et thoro*."—*Penny Cyclopædia*, ix. 39.

To almost exactly the same effect an eminent Advocate, Dr. Addams, is reported as asserting in a well known case in an argument at the bar:—"Till Foljambe's case in the Star Chamber before Archbishop Bancroft, *temp.* 2. Eliz., divorce for adultery was *à vinculo matrimonii*."—*Conway* otherwise *Beazley* against *Beazley*, in 3 *Haggard, Eccles. Rep.* 641.

This, in short, is substantially the account that everybody gives. The authority commonly referred to, the note in Salkeld, is as follows:—"A Divorce for Adultery was anciently *à vinculo*

*matrimonii*, and therefore in the beginning of the reign of Queen Elizabeth the opinion of the Church of England was, that, after a divorce for adultery, the parties might marry again; but in Foljambe's case, *anno* 44 Eliz. in the Star Chamber, that opinion was changed, and Archbishop Bancroft, upon the advice of divines, held that adultery was only a cause of divorce *à mensâ et thoro*."

This statement is copied almost *verbatim* by Dr. Burn in his *Ecclesiastical Law*:—*Vid.* Art. *Marriage*, Vol. II. p. 503. Ninth Edit. By Robert Phillimore, Advocate in Doctors' Commons, &c. Lon. 1842.

In point of fact, Bancroft was not Archbishop in the 44th of Elizabeth, nor in her reign at all. But the error here is the slightest of the misconceptions which the statement involves.

Salkeld's book is no older than the early part of the last century, and he can of himself be no authority for anything said to have been done in the reign of Elizabeth. Yet he refers to no other. In earlier works the matter is somewhat differently stated.

Thus, Bishop Gibson in his *Codex Juris Ecclesiastici Anglicani* tells us that the modern doctrine "was confirmed by the temporal judges in the case of Foliambe, who, having been divorced from his wife for incontinency on her part, married again during her life; and the second marriage was declared to be void, because it was only a divorce *à thoro et mensâ*; and because Archbishop Whitgift affirmed that several grave divines and civilians, whom he had assembled at Lambeth to consider that point, did all agree that such marriage was void."—*Vol.* II. *p.* 536.

Gibson's reference is to *Moore's Reports*, where (at p. 683, edit. of 1688) we find the following statement:—"Feb. 13, anno 44 Eliz. In Camera Stellata fuit declare per tout la cour que lou (?) Fuliambe fuit divorce de sa primer feme pur l'incontinency del feme, et aps ust marry Sarah Poge le file de Rye, vivant son primer feme, que ceo fuit un void marriage, quia le primer divorce n'est que *à mensâ et thoro*, et nemy *à vinculo matrimonii*. Et John Whitgift adonques Archevesque de Canterbury dit que il ad appel a lui al Lambeth les pluis sage divines et civilians, et ils touts avoyent ceo agree."

Moore refers to no authority; but his statement is a verbatim transcript from a collection of Star Chamber Cases in *MS. Harl.* 1330, which appears to have been written early in the seventeenth century. This MS. had probably been also in the hands of Noy, in whose *Reports* (published in 1656) at p. 100, is a statement in English substantially the same with Moore's Norman French, except that *Fuliambe* is misprinted *Fullcumbe*.

It appears, then, that it is Salkeld, the author of the blundering substitution of Archbishop Bancroft for Archbishop Whitgift, who is also responsible for the assertion that "in the beginning of the reign of Elizabeth the opinion of the Church of England was that, after a divorce for adultery, the parties might marry again." The older notes of Foljambe's case can at the most be held to imply no more than that before that case the point was undetermined.

There is certainly no sufficient ground for Salkeld's assertion. No such doctrine as he specifies was ever, properly speaking, adopted or maintained by the Church of England. Still less is there any pretence for saying that "till Foljambe's case divorce for adultery was *à vinculo matrimonii*." The form of the sentence of divorce or separation pronounced by the ecclesiastical courts in cases of adultery has, it is presumed, been always the same that it is at this day. It never, at any rate, has been *à vinculo matrimonii*, but always only *à mensâ et thoro*.

In 1548, in the beginning of the reign of Edward VI., on occasion of the Marquis of Northampton, the brother of Queen Catharine Parr, seeking to marry again after having got a divorce from his first wife in the ecclesiastical court, a commission was issued by the Crown to Archbishop Cranmer and other prelates and civilians directing them to inquire whether such second marriage in the lifetime of the divorced wife would be agreeable to the word of God. "This being a new case, and of great importance," says Burnet, "Cranmer resolved to examine it with his ordinary diligence, and searched into the opinions of the Fathers and Doctors so copiously that his collections about it grew into a large book, the original whereof I have perused." * Of these

* *Hist. of Reformation.*

collections Burnet gives an abstract; and it appears that Cranmer was inclined to allow the re-marriage in the case of the innocent party. Northampton, who had actually taken to himself a new wife, was in the first instance parted from her till the question should have been looked into; but "in the end," says Burnet, "sentence was given allowing the second marriage in that case; and by consequence confirming the Marquis of Northampton's marriage to his second wife, who, upon that, was suffered to cohabit with him. Yet four years after he was advised to have a special act of Parliament for confirming this sentence." Against this act, which was passed in 1552, the Bishops of Carlisle and Norwich, and the Earl of Derby and Lord Stourton, protested. The same year the *Reformatio Legum*, drawn up principally by Cranmer, and revised and approved by a commission of eight bishops, eight other divines, eight civilians, and eight common lawyers, proposed that the innocent party, in the case of a divorce for adultery, should be allowed to marry again; but this scheme of reform never was sanctioned either by civil or ecclesiastical authority. The utmost, therefore, that can be said is, that the side of the Church which was in the ascendant in the reign of King Edward was in favour of divorce *à vinculo* in the case of adultery. And afterwards, no doubt, such continued to be the general feeling of the Puritanical or Low Church party. But that party never was in the ascendant while Elizabeth occupied the throne; and, at all events, no change of the old law in regard to this matter was ever made either by the Church or the State.

The remarkable misconception, however, is that which is entertained in regard to what is called Foljambe's or Fuljambe's case.

In the first place it is difficult to understand how the decision of that case should by possibility have had the effect attributed to it. Of course when the decision is spoken of as having been that of the Archbishop, whether Bancroft or Whitgift, the constitution of the Court of Star Chamber is entirely misconceived. The Archbishop neither sat alone nor presided in that Court. But surely no judgment of the Star Chamber, which was a court established for the punishment of riots; conspiracies, slanders, and other offences against the public peace, having among its

members only two Judges of the courts of common law, ever could determine such a question as it is supposed to have in this instance set at rest.

At any rate, it may be confidently affirmed that nobody at the time imagined the point to have been settled by the judgment in Foljambe's case. There is the clearest evidence, in particular, that neither Whitgift nor Bancroft had any such understanding.

A work entitled "Of Divorce for Adultery and Marrying Again; that there is no sufficient warrant so to do," was published by an eminent clergyman, the Rev. Edmund Bunny, B.D., at Oxford, in 1610. It had, however, been written some years before; the Preface is dated December 1595. Foljambe's case, therefore, which was before the Star Chamber in February 1602, occurred about the middle of the interval extending between the preparation of Bunny's work and its publication. The following extract from the author's Dedication to Archbishop Bancroft, dated Oxford, July 3rd, 1610, is conclusive in proof that such a notion as that the judgment in that case had settled the question which is the subject of the work had never entered the head either of Bancroft or of Whitgift, any more than his own:—

"Your Grace's immediate predecessor [that is, Whitgift] had this treatise in his hands a good while together many years since; and to be his, if it should stand with his Grace's pleasure; and afterward, when he saw his time, approved of the publishing of it, and so to do at mine own discretion. Which, notwithstanding, (by occasion,) I thought not so good then presently to do as to await a further opportunity which then began to offer itself unto me. In the mean season it hath pleased God to take him off from his labours and travails here, and thus otherwise to furnish the room that he had. In which alteration, besides that no way I have any cause to vary, I may not deny but that now I find juster cause so to proceed than I had in the other before.

"In the present matter, besides, it is very plain that there is some question of it; and then are such treatises as are thereof in bounden duty to await the censure of such other approved judgments as to whom in such case it doth appertain. Wherein,

it having hitherto orderly proceeded to that whereunto it is come already, it was meetest so to finish the course likewise; and so actually to acknowledge, that, arising here and hence proceeding, it was most to submit itself unto and to await your Grace's censure.

"It may be also that, even in godly policy, by our superiors it will be thought meet to take some farther order to prevent the evil that so free a passage of that other course may seem to threaten; and then, the better opportunity that God hath given your Grace to such purpose, the less could I in any duty or reason have turned aside to any other."

It is plain that this never could have been written in 1610, above all never could have been addressed to the Archbishop, by any intelligent man, if the question had been finally settled, as is commonly assumed, eight years before. The Dedication, it may be added, has all the appearance of having been written with the Archbishop's knowledge and permission.

Bunny nowhere mentions Foljambe's case. Neither is it noticed by the Earl of Devonshire in his *Apology* for his marriage written in 1606. Another work upon the same subject was printed in 1673:—"The case of Divorce and Remarriage thereupon Discussed; By a Reverend Prelate of the Church of England and a Private Gentleman." This little volume consists of three treatises; the first, by Sir Charles Wolseley, in defence of the right of remarriage; the second, entitled *Animadversions* on that argument, and stated to be by a recently deceased Bishop; the third, a reply to the *Animadversions* by Wolseley. Foljambe's case is never quoted or referred to on either side. Nor does it appear to have ever been referred to in the course of the discussions which took place two or three years before this in parliament on the bill for dissolving the marriage of Lord Roos and allowing him to marry again, which was passed in 1670. The bill was opposed by all the Bishops, except only Cosins of Durham and Wilkins of Chester; and Cosins's "Argument proving that Adultery works a Dissolution of the Marriage," being the substance of several speeches which he had addressed to the House, has been published from notes

in his own handwriting.* It is entirely silent about Foljambe's case. Nor is there a trace of that case having been once mentioned in the discussions that took place in both Houses of Parliament on the several bills for granting a like relief and liberty to the Duke of Norfolk, which were brought in in 1691, 1692, and 1700. Burnet, indeed, in his narrative of this affair expressly states that from the proposed *Reformatio Legum* in King Edward's time, when "a rule was laid down allowing of a second marriage upon a divorce for adultery" (which, however, had never been made law), nothing had been done—"the matter had lain asleep"—for above a century, or till the case of Lord Roos was brought forward.†

The Registers of the Court of Star Chamber,—the sentences, decrees, and acts of which court, Sir Edward Coke states, were "engrossed in a fair book, with the names of the Lords and others of the King's Council and Justices that were present and gave their voices" (4 *Inst.* 63),—are not now to be found, and are supposed to have been destroyed on the suppression of the Court in 1640. But many of the depositions and other papers in the several cases that came before the Court are preserved in the Chapter House; and among them are the depositions taken in this case of Foljambe, properly the Case of *Rye v. Fuljambe.*

From these it appears that the case came before the court in February 1602, and that the defendant, Hercules Fuljambe, Esq., instead of having divorced his wife, had been divorced for his own adultery, not from one wife, but from two previous wives, who were both alive when he married a third, Sarah Poge, a widow with children, the daughter of the plaintiff, or complainant, Edward Rye, of Misterton, in the county of Nottingham. Several of the persons interrogated by the Court had been alleged to have been active in persuading Mrs. Poge to this marriage, and to have declared that no Christian could hold it illegal; though they deny the charge, it is probable enough that they had so acted; the notion imputed to them was the more popular doctrine; it was, of course, at any rate that which

* *State Trials*, XIII. 1332—1338. † *Own Time*, II. 126.

Fuljambe himself professed to hold. But the legality of his marriage was not the question at issue. The complaint which he was called upon to answer was, that he had in right of Sarah Poge, whom he called his wife, seized the manor-house, &c. of Misterton held by lease from the Chapter of York, and had by force kept out Rye, who maintained that he was the lessee, not his daughter, as Fuljambe asserted. The wrong with which he was charged was this illegal exclusion of the rightful tenant, and the riot or disturbance which he had thus excited. That alone was the charge upon which the Court could give judgment; although it is likely enough that, in so aggravated a case, the illegality of the defendant's pretended marriage with the daughter of the complainant, his only plea, may have been strongly pointed out and denounced. But it may be safely affirmed that no different doctrine upon that point had ever been held or countenanced by the English law. To quote this case, therefore, as settling the question, or establishing anything new, is absurd; and almost equally so whether the decision be taken to have been that of the Archbishop (as seems to be not an uncommon notion), or that of the Court of Star Chamber. No judgment of either the one or the other upon such a question could have carried with it any authority whatever.

There is no doubt, however, that at this time the remarriage, in the lifetime of the former wife or husband, of a person who had obtained a divorce was not uncommon. And for a very obvious reason. Although such remarriage was illegal, or null and void, it was not illegal in the sense of being a crime or violation of the law. If punishable at all, it was only by sentence of the ecclesiastical court. Bunny, as he tells us in his Preface, had been first moved to take up the subject by what he describes as "the liberty that in these our days many do take, of divorcing their wives for adultery and marrying of others." In an *Advertisement to the Reader* prefixed to his treatise he thus states the particular case which had set him upon the writing of it;—"A gentleman of those parts wherein most I reside, having such a purpose with him, and having already gotten into a little paper-book of his the hands of sundry of the preachers of those parts,

came to me also therewith, and desired my hand lik wise; his case there being, that, for adultery by his wife committed, he might sue the divorce and marry again. His request I denied." He adds;—"There had been a few years before of one family (but indeed one of the greatest in those parts), or thereunto appertaining, about four several persons, and those of some note besides, who had then so gotten a divorce, and were married again. And, besides those (who, it may be, had elsewhere no fellows also than that heady course any way deserved), another there was, of more special reckoning than they, who so got divorce against his wife also and married another."

This appears to have been written in 1595. If the practice was in any degree checked in the course of the next ten or fifteen years, it was not by the judgment of the Star Chamber in Foljambe's case in the last year of Elizabeth, but by certain measures of a legislative character that were adopted in the following year, the first of James. Re-marrying in the lifetime of a former husband or wife was then for the first time made a felony by the statute 1 Jac. I. c. 11. Still, however, it was provided that this act should not extend "to any person or persons that are or shall be at the time of such marriage divorced by any sentence had or hereafter to be had in the ecclesiastical court."* But the

* Yet the effect of this exception was at first disputed. In Easter Term 1636, the wife of one Porter was indicted on the statute in the Court of King's Bench, for that in the lifetime of Porter she had feloniously espoused one Rooks. She pleaded a divorce in the ecclesiastical court from Porter, and claimed the benefit of the excepting clause. "But," says Sir George Croke, (3 *Rep.* 461), "the Court much doubted whether she were within that proviso. And, if this should be suffered, many would be divorced upon such pretence, and instantly marry again, whereby many inconveniencies would ensue. Whereupon she was advised not to insist upon the law, but to procure a pardon to avoid the danger; for it was clearly agreed by all the civilians and others that this second marriage was unlawful, and that she might be in danger to be adjudged a felon by this statute."

It is clear, by the bye, from the manner in which this case was argued at the bar, that nobody then dreamed of the effect that has since been attributed to the judgment in Foljambe's case. To the argument of the

same year the following Canon (the 107th) was enacted by royal authority:—"In all sentences pronounced only for divorce and separation *à thoro et mensâ*, there shall be a caution and restraint inserted in the act of the said sentence, that the parties so separated shall live chastely and continently; neither shall they during each other's life contract matrimony with other person. And, for the better observation of this last clause, the said sentence of divorce shall not be pronounced until the party or parties requiring the same have given good and sufficient caution and security into the Court that they will not any way break or transgress the said restraint or prohibition." Another new Canon (the 105th) had at the same time strictly charged and enjoined "that, in all proceedings to divorce, . . . credit be not given to the sole confession of the parties themselves, howsoever taken upon oath, either within or without the Court." And another (the 108th) had declared that, if any Judge giving sentence of divorce or separation should not fully keep and observe the premises, he should be suspended by the Archbishop or Bishop for a year; and the sentence should be void to all intents and purposes.

This, then, was the state of the law when Lord and Lady Rich managed to get divorced from one another, on the sole confession, as is asserted, of the lady, and when one of the parties, if not both, married again in the lifetime of the other. Such were the legal doctrines and prohibitions in the face of which Laud solemnized the marriage of Lady Rich with his patron the Earl of Devonshire. The marriage was not an act which subjected any of the parties concerned in it to punishment; but, besides

counsel for the prosecution, that the divorce had been only a separation from bed and board, Holbourn and Grimstone for the defendant answered, that, although in former times it was questioned whether parties divorced for adultery might marry again in the lifetime of each other, yet now it was made clear *by the Canons* that they might not. The divorce in the present case had been for cruelty; but it was not, and could not be, argued that that made any difference as to the point in dispute. Latterly it was admitted by the Courts that a divorce *à mensâ et thoro* did come within the excepting clause of the statute.

being especially opposed to the principles of that side of the Church to which Laud belonged, it was clearly null and void in law, and it was also in direct violation of the canon.

If, however, we may rely upon the authority of Bishop Cosins, there were other instances of marriages of the same kind after this. "We have examples of such marriages," he is stated to have observed in arguing the case of Lord Roos, "in Henry IV. of France and Henry VIII. of England, Lord Montjoy, Lord Rich Bishop Thornborough, and divers others." Dr. John Thornborough, who had been chaplain to Queen Elizabeth, was successively Bishop of Limerick, Bristol, and Worcester, and died in 1641.

END OF VOL. I.

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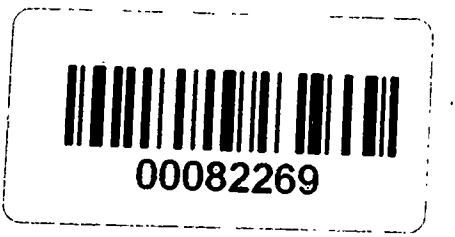
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